THE EDITORS: THE PRESENT DANGER OF ROSS PEROT

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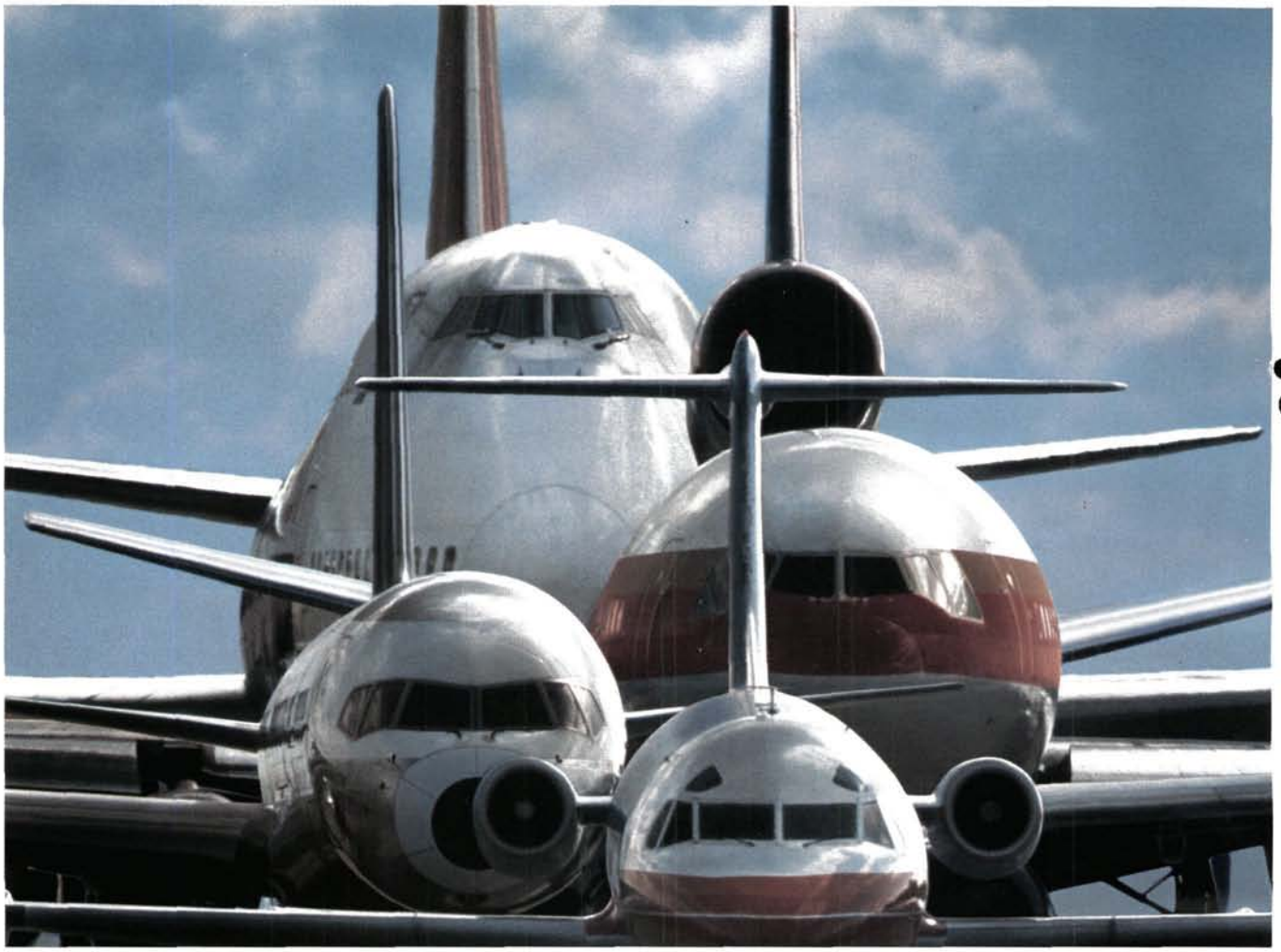

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JUNE 29, 1992

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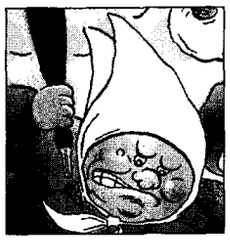

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CORRESPONDENCE

Canadian initiative

To the editors:

In your editorial on health care reform ("The Cure," June 1), you write that Canada's universal health care system demonstrates that only a single, central payer can keep costs down. This assertion labors under several flaws.

First, although Canada devotes approximately 9 percent of its gross domestic product to health care while the United States spends approximately 14 percent, these figures are misleading. In order to compare GDP costs in the two systems, one must adjust for several differences between the two nations. (1) The U.S. population is older than its Canadian counterpart. Thus Americans necessarily need and use more health services. (2) The Canadians spend much less per capita on biomedical research than we do in the United States. In essence, the Canadians, to a certain degree, get a "free ride" from American scientific advancements. (3) The two nations employ different methods of cost accounting. What counts as a "health care expenditure" in the United States is not always seen as a health expense in Canada. As noted Harvard health analyst Regina Hertzlinger indicates, when one considers these differences, the Canadian share of GDP spent on health care climbs from 9 percent to 11 percent, more than a 20 percent increase.

Second, one must consider that over the last twenty years Canada's GDP has grown at a faster rate than the U.S. GDP. In terms of local currency, real per capita GDP in Canada rose by 74 percent while the U.S. economy (per capita) expanded by only 38 percent. Correcting for this factor reveals that, annually, between 1967 and 1987 per capita health care spending climbed faster in Canada: 4.58 percent there vs. 4.38 percent for us. In other words, Canada has not succeeded in controlling health care costs; its share of GDP devoted to health has remained lower because of a more rapidly growing economy.

Third, both before and after the creation of a single payer plan, Canada has consistently spent 75 percent of what the United States has spent on health care. This trend has remained stable over time and has shown few fluctuations. Thus, in real terms, the Canadian initiative appears to have resulted in no savings relative to the U.S. system.

ANDREW SHORR
Potomac, Maryland

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Self-service

To the editors:

Like Bill Clinton, I became draft-eligible in 1969-70. Unlike him, I drew a low lottery number (double digits), and, rather than await the inevitable, chose to volunteer for military service in 1970. I do not consider myself particularly noble for having done so, but I can say in retrospect that my military service is one of the things I have done in my life of which I am the proudest. I am therefore writing to take issue with Michael Mandelbaum's assertion that those who did serve were "insufficiently wealthy, shrewd, or credentialed to evade the draft by legal means" ("Not So Slick," June 1). A quick check of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington will reveal the names of plenty of guys who met those qualifications.

I do recall with some bemusement the various artifices used by draft-age men of that time in seeking to avoid service. The legal ones often involved bizarre curriculum adjustments designed to extend one's student deferment to maximize exemption and minimize exposure to the draft. It doesn't take a Rhodes scholar to figure out what Bill Clinton was trying to accomplish. Therein lies the root cause of Mandelbaum's bewilderment: the American people simply don't accept the Clinton campaign's description of Clinton's actions as a "crisis of conscience."

Though I emphatically agree that this issue does not justify Clinton being publicly pilloried, neither does it qualify him for "Profiles in Courage" status, as Mandelbaum suggests.

ROBERT S. KENNEDY JR.
New Orleans, Louisiana

Barnes's car

To the editors:

Fred Barnes believes that free will governs his travel habits, but he couldn't be more mistaken ("Me and My Cars," Washington Diarist, June 1). Barnes, like most Americans, is car-irrational: he drives because parking and several other services are laid on by our society. Only the cost of fuel affects the driver's decision. Sixty percent of the costs are sunk or deferred—depreciation, insurance, maintenance, repairs. About 40 percent is "free"—use of the highways, municipal services, et al. And Barnes's parking is

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not free. TNR must either reduce paychecks, reduce profit margins, or increase prices. (Whoa! In paying TNR's price, I am paying for Barnes's parking. What a bummer!) The real cost of a Barnes commute trip is probably between $7 and $10. But he thinks that the cost is more like 85 cents, less than Metro fare.

Let Barnes consult his favorite economist. He'll surely be advised that an important part of present American economic troubles is that we don't save nough. Twenty-five percent of GNP is devoted to the costly automotive sector; is our low savings rate so surprising? If TNR would cash out its parking subsidies, and if Barnes would junk that Oldsmobile (a symbol of past idiocies) and buy a monthly Metro pass, and if his wife and daughters would follow suit, the Barnes family could stash away their considerable savings, and we Americans (including Barnes) would all be much better off.

I do hope he was putting us on.

STANLEY HART
Altadena, California

To the editors:

Fred Barnes is just scratching the surface. There is more than just a "moralistic new crusade" against driving—there is a full-scale movement within both federal and state governments, under the guise of environmental and safety concerns, to make driving such a pain that people would have to give it up.

Take the recent decision by the Northeastern states to adopt California's air quality standards, even though that state's smog is caused by topographical and climatological patterns unique to that area. There is also the continued enforcement in six states of the inefficient and wasteful 55-mph speed limit, the ridiculous proposed increase in CAFE standards, the erosion of motorists' Fourth Amendment rights in the name of clearing drunk drivers off the road, and the arbitrary and sometimes irrational standards used to determine DWI in the first place. No one seems to realize that one of our most basic rights is under siege.

DANIEL CASE
Buffalo, New York

Burning up

To the editors:

In "The Odd Couple" (June 1) Mark Hosenball refers to Saddam Hussein's "notorious threat to 'burn half of Israel' to the ground." Actually Saddam said Iraq would burn half of Israel "if it [Israel] tries to wage anything against Iraq," (*The Boston Globe*, April 3, 1990), a rather different statement. Presumably TNR is not prepared to say the United States made "notorious threats" against the Soviet Union during the cold war, as the United States maintained that it would attack the Soviet Union with nuclear weapons if the Soviet Union attacked Europe, much less the United States itself.

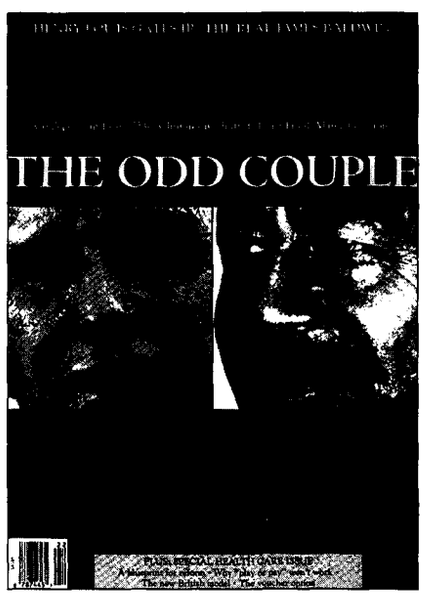
SAM HUSSEINI
New York, New York

The writer is an associate at Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR).

Taking the plunge

To the editors:

Daniel Radosh's article about Urban Plunge ("Instant Empathy," May 18) is fraught with incorrect and unfair



assumptions about this and other similar programs. The first one is that people "take the plunge" as an easy way to say that they have done their part to end homelessness. This assumption could not be further from the truth. As a Georgetown student who participated in the Plunge and who will help run future ones, I can speak for the commitment of these people to fighting homelessness. The people looking for a shortcut are those who give a little pocket change to a beggar on the streets instead of using their talents and business connections to provide really needed assistance.

Government statistics and observations of the homeless from a distance just cannot provide the perspective that befriending the homeless and sleeping with them can. Urban Plunge also helps show participants how to relate to the homeless on an everyday basis. One lesson I learned during my Plunge was the value the homeless put on what we would consider simple courteous conversation. This lesson will serve me well in future efforts to assist the homeless.

JAMES MYERS
Washington, D.C.

Non-exempt

To the editors:

Mary Graham offers useful comments in support of her view that bankruptcy doesn't have much to do with the poor ("Going for Broke," June 8). But she says that Bowie Kuhn and Marvin Warner didn't do anything illegal. Well, they *are* walking the streets. But if Kuhn and Warner had taken all their money and put it in their mothers' names for the purpose of hindering, delaying, or defrauding creditors, then all sorts of awful consequences might have beset them. And there are plenty of judges who believe that loading up on exempt property is no different, and who would be willing to deny the miscreant the protection of his discharge in bankruptcy.

JOHN D. AYER
Davis, California

The writer is professor of law at the UC Davis Law School.

Science class

To the editors:

We at the Cavallo Foundation were very pleased to see Philip J. Hilts's story about the David Baltimore case ("The Science Mob," May 18). Your readers may be interested to learn that on June 25, Margot O'Toole will be a recipient of the Cavallo Prize, one of three $10,000 awards given annually to recognize acts of moral courage done for the public good at the cost of personal sacrifice. Dr. O'Toole persisted in her efforts to hold scientific integrity above academic politics, and we applaud her for this.

LEAH GREENWALD
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The writer is executive director of the Cavallo Foundation.

Poetic bijou

To the editors:

David Sofield's diamond-shaped poem "Aubade (On a 'Talking Pyramid Clock')" (May 11) was a poetic bijou. As the upper triangle suggested physical stability, and so reflected the mood of those lengthening lines, the lower and inverted triangle hinted and mirrored delicate psychological balance.

"Of the many definitions of poetry," remarked W. H. Auden, "the simplest is still the best: 'memorable speech.'" That terse criterion sums my appreciation.

WILLIAM DAUENHAUER
Wickliffe, Ohio

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FROM WASHINGTON

Balancing act

The balanced budget amendment debate has taken an odd turn. Most of the arguments being offered by opponents, predicting dire consequences if the Constitution is amended to require a balanced federal budget, apply not just to the amendment but to a balanced budget itself. Yet most of these opponents claim to favor balancing the budget.

The Washington Post editorial page, for example, has often called for a federal budget *surplus*, to free up capital for private investment. Yet the *Post* presents nightmare scenarios of "brutal" budget slashing to scare people away from a balanced budget amendment. Others argue that, under pressure from such an amendment, the government will starve R&D and public infrastructure in order to preserve middle-class entitlements, or it will kick expensive civic obligations downward onto the states and cities. All these are live possibilities. But they are an equal challenge to anyone who advocates a balanced budget, with or without the whip of a constitutional mandate.

Of course the amendment would put a balanced budget on a rigid deadline: two years after ratification. Figuring three years to work its way through the states, we're talking 1997. That's ambitious, to be sure. But what reason is there to think Congress and the president will balance the budget in ten years or fifteen years if they can't do it in five? Anyway, these same critics also complain that a constitutional amendment will become an excuse to *put off* balancing the budget until it takes effect (as if anyone expects the budget to be balanced *before* 1997 in any event).

Unlike the *Post*, *The New York Times* editorial page not only opposes the balanced budget amendment, but snootily dismisses the very idea of a balanced budget as an "ill-conceived accounting concept." The concept offends "by lumping public consumption with public investment and requiring everything to be paid out of current revenue." This is a popular dodge. Bill Clinton proposes to divide the federal budget into three parts: a "past budget for interest payments; a present budget for spending on current consumption; and a future budget for investments in things that will make us richer." He promises to go into debt only for the third category.

The argument, in a nutshell, is that the government is like a business. No one regards it as irresponsible when a business borrows money to make investments that will pay off in the future. Therefore there is nothing irresponsible or unbusinesslike about government doing the same. By one estimate, the federal government spends about $135 billion a year on physical capital—roads, buildings, etc.—plus another $70 billion on research and $38 billion on education and training. It is silly to expect all that to be paid for out of ready cash.

The trouble with this argument is that life doesn't start today (or the day Bill Clinton is inaugurated). The bridge you build today benefits tomorrow, but the bridge you built yesterday benefits today. Ditto highways, research, education, etc. Only if you are prepared to account for all those past expenditures this year can you justify pushing this year's expenditures into the future. Whether that calculation would leave the deficit looking bigger or smaller is an open question.

Furthermore, if the government were really to start keeping its books like an honest business, it would have to include as current expenses the obligations it is undertaking to future retirees by accepting their Social Security and Medicare taxes. That calculation would make this year's actual cash flow deficit (a mere $400 billion) look trivial.

And even businesses have to worry about cash flow in the end. If they borrow for investments that don't produce enough money to pay back the principal and interest, they eventually go out of business. True, no sensible business has a rigid rule against a negative cash flow in any particular year. But as a nation we have proved ourselves incapable of restricting our long-run negative cash flow any other way.

One problem with "capital accounting" for the government is that many government investments like roads and education don't provide a direct return to the government itself. Another is the fuzziness of the concept of government "investment," which makes it easy to abuse. A prominent economist has even suggested that arts subsidies are an investment in the nation's cultural future, and therefore OK to finance by borrowing.

Clinton is right that the government, like American society as a whole, spends

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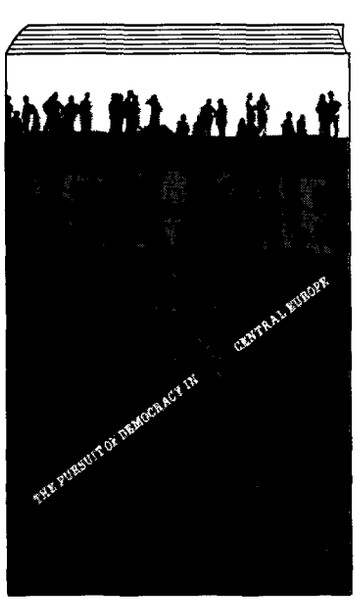
"BY FAR THE BEST WESTERNER'S DESCRIPTION OF THE LAST 20 YEARS OF COMMUNISM IN CENTRAL EUROPE."

—JAN URBAN



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 29, 1992

THE PRESENT DANGER

Enough dizziness in this democracy. It's time for a quiz.

Which phenomenon of twentieth-century politics, and which candidate for president in 1992, answer to the following attributes:

- managerialism, and the belief that society should be organized like a corporation, hierarchically and with efficiency as its highest objective;
- populism, and the mystical faith in the existence of something called "the people," which is the enemy of all elites and is capable of perfect agreement with itself, when it is not interfered with by those same elites;
- the cult of leadership, according to which "the people" may attain its state of harmony only by means of the political ascension of a person who can be trusted with state power because he is not afraid to make use of state power, whose authority is owed in part to his will, which justifies any arbitrariness or change of mind;
- the critique of democratic institutions, which are deemed to be essentially spineless, divided against themselves, legalistic and procedural, poor in imagination and poorer in will, bickering and trimming bodies that betray "the people" who invested them with power, and can therefore divest them of it;
- the love of technology, which is believed to have made certain political blandishments possible for the first time in history;
- militarism, and the conspiratorial mentality, and the certainty that human associations must be organized around a rigid chain of command;
- the celebration of action as an end in itself and the suspicion of intellectual activity (and intellectuals) as an impediment to action;
- puritanism, and the imposition of a draconian moral uniformity in all the details of life, as an angry response to the complexities of modern living;
- the zealous and dogmatic definition of the social norm, of who does and does not belong, who is equal and who is not, definitions that are accompanied by a feeling of rescuing society from deviations, and of restoring it to the verities of a time that is past?

The answers are: fascism and Ross Perot.

Put simply—and he is a rather simple thing—Perot is the closest American approximation of fascism ever to have a real shot at the Oval Office. His *sacro egoismo*; his organization of his own company almost as a movement; his certainty that there is no important difference between a government and a business; his paramilitary adventures abroad; his contempt for the institutions of American government; his condescension toward the Constitution, which is most flagrantly displayed in his astonishing proposal to transfer the taxing power from the legislature to "the people"; his utter intellectual flexibility, which permits him to say that it is day and then that it is night without any worry about contradiction; his certainty that he represents—indeed incarnates—the general will, and his fantasy of a modem-ed Rousseauism, according to which "electronic town meetings" will answer all questions definitively; his intrusive obsession with the moral particulars of people's lives; his confidence that he personifies a social norm, and therefore a social ideal, when in fact he is a social archaism, the last gasp of a unicultural America that has been dying—and justly—for decades. Is there any need to go on? Perot is the easiest call in contemporary American politics since David Duke. Indeed, the only important characteristics of fascism that are missing from Perot are an ideology and a spiritual interest, and in these he is almost comically lacking.

No, he does not remind us of Hitler (though he and Mussolini would have talked long into the night). And no, we are not stoutly defending the status quo in Washington. It *is* bloated and compromised almost to the point of stupefaction. But we stoutly deny that the failures of this president and this Congress, the cynical clubbiness into which the executive and legislative have collapsed, amount to the failure of the American system itself. Bush is no better, but no worse, than Van Buren or Tyler or Taylor or Fillmore or Buchanan or Garfield or Hayes or Harding or Ford. He is, in other words, an argument against himself, not an argument against the Constitution. Perot elides the difference; and his many supporters, who are just as manipulable as the officials they despise for manipulability, seem not to care.

If the achievement of the Founders can be summarized in a sentence, it is this: that they married a pessimistic view of human nature to an optimistic view of democracy. The tulip mania known as Perotism vindicates their pessimism. But their optimism also deserves to be vindicated. So, throw the bums out; they are a disgrace to the American system. But Perot is worse than a disgrace to the American system. He is a danger to it. •

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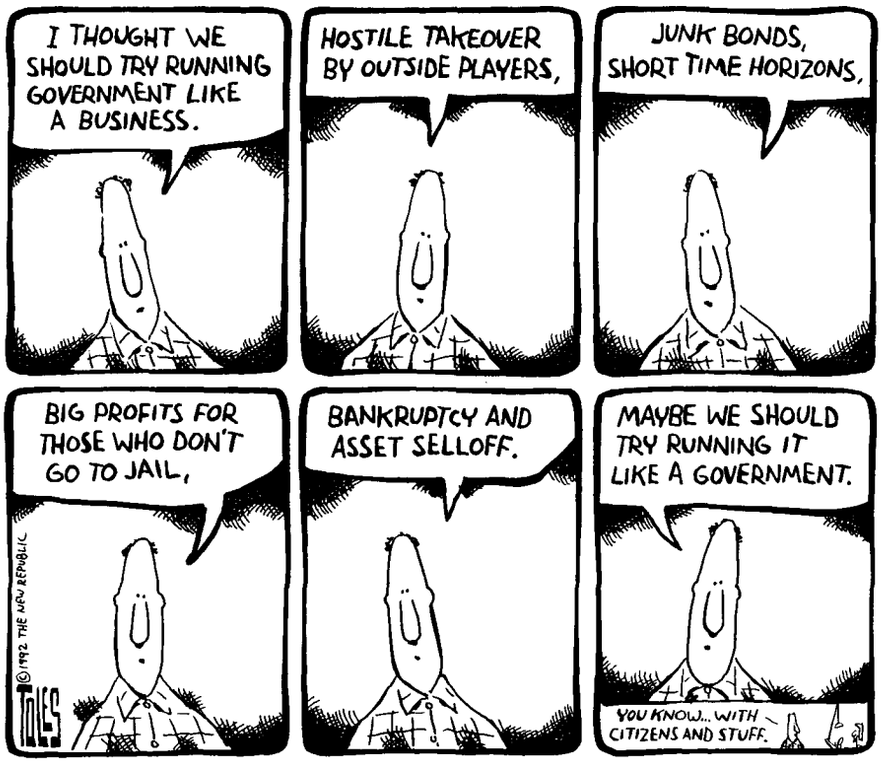
NOTEBOOK

BUSHISM OF THE WEEK: "It won't be—of course, we have submitted a balance, but it won't be in two years. And we have submitted budgets that get in it. We've got one right up there now that does that. And I think it's going to be five years." —June 4, at a White House press conference, responding to a question about whether he would submit a balanced budget to Congress if he is re-elected

NUMBER TWO: Clinton's last remaining card in his increasingly beleaguered bid for president is his vice presidential pick. So far he seems to be blowing it. With every move he seems to be shifting his campaign to the same base of liberal interest groups that have cost the Democrats the last three elections. In a three-way race, reaching out to the alienated middle will be more than usually crucial for his prospects. It's the Democrats who require the big tent solution, not the Republicans. Tell that to the three-person task force Clinton has appointed to vet his vice presidential options for him. Its members are Vernon Jordan, a lawyer-fixer from Washington; Madeline Kunin, a former governor of Vermont with views that appeal to the state whose one Representative in Congress is a socialist; and, as chairman, Warren Christopher, an establishment attorney who also heads the totemic commission convened by the mayor of Los Angeles after the riots. Christopher was Cyrus Vance's squishy undersecretary of state, a certified graybeard with impeccable paleoliberal credentials. These three people have been leaking like crazy, and here are the names they've given to the great mentioners: Bill Bradley, Harris Wofford, John Kerry, Pat Schroeder, Jay Rockefeller, Bob Kerrey, and Bill Moyers. Of these, only Bradley would come close to solving Clinton's problem. Wofford would be perceived as a throwback to a different era, whose only advantage would be that he would probably win his home state. Which is more than you can say for the others. Who else is there? Well, it won't surprise our readers that one of the first to come to our mind is Al Gore Jr., who has strength precisely where Clinton is weak: military service, a vote for the Gulf war, a strong environmental record. And there's also Dave McCurdy, a congressman from Oklahoma, who among today's Washington brigade is conspicuously talented and free of paleoliberal cant. Sure, he's a congressman, but he's never been one of the clubbier ones, and has a good record of creating headaches for Speakers Wright and Foley. He's also strong in foreign policy and defense, uniquely able, we think, to take on the Bush-Baker cabal in an area where few Democrats fear to tread and more need to. Clinton knows these facts; he also knows his vice presidential choice will define his candidacy in a critical way. If he chooses someone who will give the party's left sleepless nights, then he will be showing the party that he is truly a new voice in the Democratic conversation; and he will be showing critical independent voters that the Democrats are no longer the problem but part of the solution.


I THOUGHT WE SHOULD TRY RUNNING GOVERNMENT LIKE A BUSINESS.
HOSTILE TAKEOVER BY OUTSIDE PLAYERS,
JUNK BONDS, SHORT TIME HORIZONS,
BIG PROFITS FOR THOSE WHO DON'T GO TO JAIL,
BANKRUPTCY AND ASSET SELLOFF.
MAYBE WE SHOULD TRY RUNNING IT LIKE A GOVERNMENT.
YOU KNOW... WITH CITIZENS AND STUFF.
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TNR

KINDER, GENTLER: Ross Perot's statement that he wouldn't hire uncloseted homosexuals or adulterers for his Cabinet was later explained away by the Texas billionaire. He claimed that he was merely trying to avoid public controversy in constructing his Cabinet. Funny. At his old company EDS, he had a remarkably similar policy. According to the *Dallas Morning News* of May 30, a recruiter for EDS was given these instructions: "Do not hire anyone who has a weak handshake; a person who has a weak handshake is probably gay and might have AIDS; do not hire gay people; alcoholics are slobs; do not hire any recovering alcoholics; do not hire anyone with mental problems; try to find out if any prospective employee, or his or her spouse, has any serious health problems or immediate family problems." And whatever you do, don't give them health coverage.

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THE SEARCHER: Another dark side of Perot's character slowly coming to light is his contempt for civil liberties, especially those protected by the Fourth Amendment. In a 1988 interview with Laura Miller, then of the *Dallas Times-Herald*, Perot proposed that the police do house-to-house searches for drugs and guns in sections of South Dallas. "Pick a night and cordon off a section of South Dallas," Perot reportedly said (he now denies the quote). "Send hundreds of police officers—however many it would take—into the area to vacuum it up. Shake down everybody on the street. Search every house and apartment. Confiscate all drugs and weapons." And two years ago, according to another story in the *Dallas Morning News*, Perot got a Dallas judge to allow warrantless searches of a house near his estate that he rented out. Perot cited "certain unsavory actions" in asking to search the property three times a day; he claimed he was afraid the tenant would damage the house, valued at $2 million. •

A remembrance.

SANE MAX

By Martin Peretz

My teacher, Max Lerner, died last week in his ninetieth year. He was not just the teacher of those thousands who, like me, sat in his classrooms over more than half a century at Harvard and Williams, Brandeis and Sarah Lawrence, Notre Dame and New Delhi, and doubtless a few others I've forgotten. Lerner taught also in his writings, which were not just an expression of the self but an encounter with audiences he knew and about whom he cared. This was the other half of his career, and maybe more than half. Lerner was the first truly scholarly American journalist. He lived and struggled with the temperamental tensions of at least two different callings, rejecting the obscurantism of one as much as he eluded the superficiality of the other.

I met Max when I was a 16-year-old college freshman, but I'd already been reading him in the *New York Post*, then the intellectual's tabloid, for maybe five years. He wrote primarily about politics, and that's what he primarily taught. But his conception of politics was (for the '50s) unusually bold. No one I've ever known was more stimulated by ideas, and no one wanted more to stimulate others. His daunting eyes and animated face reflected the excitement he felt, which also he wanted to convey to others.

But knowledge is acquired alone, and at the burial service in Sag Harbor, one of his sons spoke of how content Max was to be with his thoughts and with his books, solitary and solaced, puzzled and puzzling. He truly believed in the republic of learning, writing once that it was the only genuine collective he knew, and went his own way, not out of disrespect for colleagues, but because he knew no other way. Even enlisted in a cause, he was a soldier in no one's army. And other people's limits were not his. So he wrote about Marx and Machiavelli, about Marilyn Monroe and Dr. Kinsey, the breadth of his vision expressing the breadth of his life.

At the age of 27 he became managing editor of the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, certified early as a polymath. And as a polymath, he was insatiable. He learned at 80 enough about medicine to orchestrate his own treatments for cancer, keeping death at bay for nearly a decade beyond the time allotted him by doctors. He wrote about this in *Wrestling With the Angel*. But the polymath did have his special interests, and they engaged him through his life. Constitutionalism underlay the genius of democratic politics, and his essays from the '30s on John Marshall and Roger Taney, the Court and the covenant, bear reading and rereading today. It was also on the Supreme Court where he found the one intellectual hero of his life, Oliver Wendell Holmes, to whose work he returned again and again in his books and articles. Lerner's great essays were themselves a course in social theory: his interpretation of Veblen is both more complicated and more accessible than anything else on the subject. His writings on Tocqueville are the best in the English language. He evoked nuance and clarity from Mill and William James, and from lesser lights too, always with discovery and wonder. Once, however, I saw him carrying a well-marked copy of Derrida, and I lamented not having read anything by the then fashionable thinker. "Oh, don't worry," Max assured me, "by the time I've finished this book, it'll already be passé."

Max loved America. There is really no other way to say this. His passion, even his partisanship, testified to that love. He was, of course, very much on the left for nearly fifteen crucial years, lured by the idea of revolution though not by its reality. And he was not indulgent toward Stalin or Stalinism. Max's demurrals from the radical orthodoxies enmeshed him in quarrels at *The Nation*, which he edited for two years, and at *PM*, where he started his career as a columnist. If Max was mesmerized by anyone, it was Franklin Roosevelt, the aristocratic scion whose mission was to include the excluded in the national life once dominated by his own class. And Max knew that the process of inclusion was unfinished, that it needed to include not only classes but other peoples and races.

Max brought an immigrant's love for America to the politics with which he grappled; and, though I am not an immigrant, it is a love I can grasp and feel. An immigrant's patriotism—how old-fashioned the word now sounds—is not a sentiment in the abstract. It is a comparative judgment, America viewed against every place else. Max would try to explain this to his Marxist or faux-Marxist critics, and they wouldn't understand. Herbert Marcuse, once in

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my hearing, charged Max with "false consciousness," and the editors of *Dissent* were not much less derisive. They said he was part of the great American celebration, to which he retorted, "And isn't there much to celebrate?" America, he used to say, is the only fabulous country.

Max, born in the Pale of Settlement to Bessie and Benjamin, buried in the presence of grandsons Joshua and Benjamin, with his children reciting the immemorial kaddish, was, of course, a Jewish immigrant. Max never forgot the slights meted out to him at Yale (and it still rankles that his university hadn't, nearly seventy years after he graduated, yet honored him), and meted out to him elsewhere too. But Jews know, through memory passed from generation to generation, why, for all its faults and unfulfilled promises, America is *die goldene medinah*, the golden country. Certainly Max knew why: America affirmed for him the Jewish exile.

But it did not negate the Jewish Return to their own land, and Max's columns from the late 1940s on followed the tribulations of restored Zion as if they were palpably his. Twenty-five years ago this month, his son Michael went to Israel, by instinct almost, to volunteer in the emergency resolved by the Six-Day War. In Max's imagination this act put him and his offspring in the great chain of being that is Jewish civilization. Max was, then, at once cosmopolite and primordial, in precarious balance. If you do not care about your own, he once asked, how can you care about others?

Max was full of such questions, personal, philosophical, practical. He never posed them meanly or mischievously. Around his plain pine coffin in Long Island stood women and men, old and young, whose lives had been touched by his, some of us like me, whose lives had been shaped by his. This touching, this shaping were the ways of love. At his death, then, there was little consolation in the full life he'd led, for that fullness was also ours, and we are now bereft. Still, I hadn't visited him in the end: it's painful to see someone with whom you've been enmeshed prepare to go. But he didn't go quietly; and he went only when his wife and children were about his bed. •

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

TISSUE ISSUE

By Robert Bazell

George Bush, apparently intent upon maintaining his spotless record of sustained vetoes and upon proving himself to the anti-abortion movement, is offering millions of sick and desperate Americans an enduring civics lesson. The administration's ban on federal funding for fetal tissue transplants will likely stand, denying hope to those with Parkinson's disease, diabetes, and dozens of other infirmities.

According to several members of Congress, the White House lobbied more aggressively on the congressional attempt to overturn the ban than it has on any issue since the resolution to support the Gulf war. Members say some of those who are leaving Congress were told they would be offered jobs in a second Bush administration; others received personal phone calls from Bush and Vice President Dan Quayle or invitations to the White House. Members are loath to admit on the record that they succumbed to such pressure, but there was plenty. One member who made a casual, glib remark about the anti-abortion movement at a White House meeting heard the remark read back to him verbatim by the archbishop from his district. Republican Representative Fred Upton of Michigan, who worked as a congressional liaison staffer in the Reagan White House and now serves as deputy Republican whip, said: "They pulled out all the stops on this one over a number of weeks. Usually one staff guy in the White House works an issue. Everyone worked this one."

Plenty of members of Congress and others personally opposed to abortion favor the use of fetal tissue to save or improve lives. Guy Walden, the Baptist preacher whose child received a fetus-to-fetus transplant in an attempt to cure a genetic disease, lobbied to overturn the ban. Senator Strom Thurmond, whose daughter suffers from diabetes, signed a Dear Colleague letter urging others to "Support research. Support hope." Dr. Otis Bowen, who instituted the temporary ban in 1988 as Reagan's secretary of health and human services, wanted it lifted. "I am opposed to abortion," Bowen, a former Indiana governor, told me after the vote, "but it does not make scientific or medical sense to continue this ban. As long as abortions are legal, we are wasting valuable life-saving material."

But the Bush administration will hear none of this attempt to divorce one's views about abortion from the use of tissue that would be discarded anyway, accepting instead the argument of the staunchest anti-abortion groups that the transplants will legitimize and even encourage abortion. Dr. John Willkie, founder of the National Right to Life Committee, once described to me what he saw as the quandary of women considering abortions. "They can't quite decide yes or no; this is good, this is bad," he said. "And then to have someone come to them and say, 'Well, my dear, we know this is a tragedy, but some good will come of it if you give us the tissues for someone else.' That suddenly pushes them over the edge."

The bill Bush is vetoing includes provisions to ensure that transplants do not encourage abortions, and it attempts to deal with the thicket of other ethical issues around fetal tissue research. The law would prohibit the sale of aborted tissue, and it would allow researchers to seek a woman's permission to use tissue for transplantation only after she had decided to have the abortion.

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And to calm fears that women would become impregnated and undergo abortions to help friends or relatives, it would forbid women from knowing or designating the recipient of the tissue. Ironically, the veto will allow those few groups continuing fetal tissue research with private money to remain free of these legal constraints. But whatever the laws, there is not likely to be a shortage of tissue. One-and-a-half million American women undergo abortions yearly, a figure that has remained constant for more than a decade. Even if the Supreme Court overturns *Roe* v. *Wade* and some states outlaw abortion, and even if fetal transplants are wildly successful for every conceivable application, there is not likely to be any shortage of tissue. The problem is a shortage of federal money to carry out needed research.

Fetal tissue appears to be uniquely suited for a range of therapies. Animal studies have shown that often a host will not reject transplanted fetal tissue as readily as adult tissue. And transplanted fetal tissue can often grow better than adult tissue, replacing metabolites and parts of organs destroyed by disease or injury. Fetal transplants in animals have shown at least some success in treating models of spinal cord injury, Alzheimer's disease, blindness, and hearing loss, to name just a few conditions. And in highly limited human studies researchers have tried using fetal tissue to treat at least twenty conditions ranging from diabetes and Parkinson's disease to leukemia, schizophrenia, and several inherited metabolic disorders. But all this remains nothing more than promise until researchers can carry out the needed experiments to learn whether and under what conditions the transplants actually do alleviate human disease and injury. Many scientists believe that the best tissue for transplant ultimately will come not from fetuses but from genetically engineered adult tissue. Unfortunately, the only way to learn how to undertake the genetic engineering is to perform the experiments with fetal tissue.

Those championing the ban emphasize that it prohibits only federal support. Privately financed efforts can continue. But in the reality of American medical research today, experiments opposed by the federal government essentially cease. Not only does the government pay for most research, almost all hospitals and laboratories receive federal money. Thus the ban creates, as one medical school dean told me, "not just a chilling effect, but a hard freeze." Dozens of institutions planning to undertake fetal transplant research abandoned their plans when the ban took effect even if private money was available. "You look at all your millions of dollars of grants for other projects," said the same dean, who did not want to be identified, "and you ask yourself, is it worth the risk? They could yank anything or everything."

As part of its effort to prevent Congress from lifting the ban, the administration proposed setting up a bank of fetal tissue from ectopic pregnancies and miscarriages and financing it at the startlingly high level of $20 million. Almost every scientist familiar with fetal tissue research quickly spurned the idea. Such tissue would often be unsterile, genetically defective, or both. There was one critical advocate, however. Dr. Bernadine Healy, head of the National Institutes of Health, declared in a letter circulated in Congress that she believed the president should veto the bill. Of the tissue bank, Healy wrote, "I can state unequivocally as a physician and scientist that this approach is feasible and should be given a chance to prove its efficacy."

Though Bush's veto is likely to prevail, the vote will be close. The Senate passed the measure 85-12, more than enough to fend off the veto. At this writing, House staff members believe that they are nine or ten votes short of the necessary two-thirds. When lobbyists visited Republican Senator Alan Simpson, who voted to lift the ban, he quoted President Bush as saying, "Who are the sons of bitches who backed me in the corner on this one?" Simpson told me he had not talked to the president—that he was only imagining what Bush might say. Whatever Bush said, this can't be a sweet victory for the White House.

ROBERT BAZELL is science correspondent for NBC News.

Ross Perot goes shopping.

BELTWAY FOR HIRE

By Fred Barnes

Ed Rollins had his reasons. Two years before he joined Ross Perot, the boys at the Bush White House tarred him as a pariah. His sin: as boss of the Republican campaign for House seats in 1990, he advised candidates to distance themselves from President Bush's unpopular tax hike. After the election, Rollins was fired. The Rollins-Bush rift continued to widen as he criticized Bush in TV appearances. Still, in March, GOP Governor Pete Wilson of California suggested Rollins to oversee the Bush campaign this fall in California, Rollins's home state. Robert Teeter, Bush's campaign manager, instantly nixed that idea. Only weeks before, Teeter recalled, Rollins had raised the taboo issue of scandals involving Bush's sons. Even the hiring of Rollins's wife, Sherrie, as White House liaison to interest groups didn't make Rollins any more palatable. When William Kristol, Vice President Dan Quayle's chief of staff, invited Rollins to lunch at the White House mess in May, it raised eyebrows. Several aides later told Kristol he'd committed an act of daring.

Rollins is the exception that proves the rule. And the rule is it's dangerous for anyone in Washington, Republican or Democrat, to side with Perot, which is why so few have. Most of the Beltway crowd isn't like

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Rollins. He's disaffected, which made the jump to Perot easier. He's not dependent for his livelihood on a network of friends, associates, and partisan allies in Congress, the administration, or pressure groups. He's a high-profile operative who'll get political (or other) work post-Perot. Rollins was not daunted by the Beltway dilemma: Does a lucrative fling with Perot's presidential campaign outweigh the prospect of never working in Washington again? For most, it doesn't.

Perot, like any credible independent bid for the White House, unsettles not only the two main political parties, but the business culture of Washington in general. The prosperous private sector—consultants, lobbyists, information brokers, etc.—is populated by people who built relationships when they worked in campaigns, Congress, or the executive branch. Now they exploit those ties for money, sometimes big money. Most of these relationships are partisan (Republican campaign consultants don't work for Democrats, and vice versa), and that makes Perot a dilemma. There's a price to pay. "I might not work for Democrats again," says Democratic pollster Bill Hamilton in explaining why, among other reasons, he spurned overtures from Perot. Had he signed on, "it would be forced retirement, win, lose, or draw." Bush aides have been explicit about banishing Republicans who go to work for Perot. Charles Black, senior political adviser in the Bush campaign, says he'll "spread the word" that defectors shouldn't be hired. "People who desert the party ought to pay a professional price for it," he says. Republican National Committee chair Rich Bond agrees.

Republican Frank Luntz, a pollster for Perot, has already paid. He lost two Republican House candidates as clients when he enlisted with Perot in May (a GOP Senate candidate in Utah, Joe Cannon, stuck with Luntz). When first approached by Perot agents, Luntz asked friends in the Bush campaign to find out what would happen if he joined Perot. "The message came back I'd be screwed," says Luntz. "I was at least hoping for a carrot and a stick." It was all stick. He was informed, Luntz says, "you can forget about anything in this town for about four years, until the Bush people work themselves out of the system." Luntz likens himself to a Soviet dissident. "If you're a little dissident, they overlook you. If you're a major dissident, they can't touch you. But if you're a middle-level dissident, you get hit the hardest. That's me." Rollins qualifies as a major dissident.

Then why did Luntz defect to Perot? Luntz is young (30), unmarried, and no Bushie. "I'm a Reagan Republican," he says. "I'm loyal to a philosophy, not to an individual, and that makes me not support George Bush." Luntz defected first as campaign pollster to Patrick Buchanan. The jump to Perot was a bolder step. "One is ideological disloyalty," Luntz says. "The other is partisan disloyalty. With one, you get punished but you can come back. With the other, you're never forgiven." He insists he wasn't lured by money, but by the chance to work at a high level in a historic campaign. He claims that Perot is more conservative than Bush. In any case, he has a safety net. He's an adjunct professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, teaching one course a semester. After the campaign, he hopes to hook on full-time at Penn, an exile from Washington.

Ray Strother, a top Democratic media consultant, turned down Perot to keep his 30-year-old son, Dane, from being exiled. His son is his partner and wants to stay in the campaign business for decades more. In March Strother was summoned to Dallas by Tom Luce, Perot's chief adviser. Strother spoke to Perot for forty-five minutes. Perot was cool to the normal scheme for paying media consultants: a fee plus 15 percent of the media buy. Should Perot spend $60 million on media, which is roughly what's anticipated, that would mean $9 million for Strother. Too much, Perot said. "I won't pay people a premium for spending more of my money," he told Strother. But aides said Perot would be willing to pay $1 million or more, and Strother nearly bit. Then he thought about it some more. He'd already experienced a backlash from working for a non-Democrat (he did media for Democrat-turned-Republican Buddy Roemer's bid for re-election as Louisiana governor in 1991). "It didn't affect my business really," he says. Working for Perot would, he decided. "That would have been a retirement swan song. It's one thing for me to take the money and run. But I didn't want to take my son out of the business. Family is more important than money."

Like Strother, GOP pollster Richard Wirthlin and former drug czar William Bennett rebuffed Perot. They're Beltway residents who haven't burned their bridges in Washington and don't intend to. Wirthlin, who was Ronald Reagan's pollster, worked for Tom Luce's losing campaign for governor of Texas in 1990. Luce ran as a Republican. Perot isn't, and Wirthlin declined to work for him. Bennett met with Perot advisers in May to talk about drugs and education. When asked if they could list him as a member of Perot's board of advisers, Bennett said, "Well, I don't know about that." The next day he told them no. A formal link to Perot wouldn't help Bennett's chances in the 1996 Republican presidential race. Besides, he says he's simply "not impressed" with Perot. "What I know about him, I disagree with. He's pro-choice, protectionist, opposed to a North American free trade zone. And I didn't appreciate the ad hominem on the president." Bennett talks to Bush frequently.

Compare the Wirthlin-Bennett reaction with that of Jerry Rafshoon and Pat Choate, two Washington figures who've cut their ties to the Democratic Party. Rafshoon, Jimmy Carter's media adviser, has abandoned politics for filmmaking. "I'm not a consultant or a lobbyist or a lawyer." Thus he's not tied financially to a party or a web of relationships in Washington. "I'm unabashedly supporting Perot," Rafshoon says. He's talked to Perot and offered political advice, but he's

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not on the payroll. He hasn't suffered for it. "Nothing's been burned in front of my house." He lives in Georgetown. "I like the city. We have a lot of good friends. I hope I still do."

Choate attacked the political culture of Washington in his 1991 book, *Agents of Influence,* which warned against foreign governments (especially Japan) that employ influential political figures as lobbyists. He named Republicans (Charles Black, for example) and Democrats (Democratic National Committee chairman Ron Brown, among others). "I ripped it when I did *Agents,*" he says. "I destroyed quite a few friendships [in Washington]." Perot has dozens of secret admirers in Washington, Choate says, but "they're fearful of breaking their party affiliations which represent networks and relationships. That's how they make a living. They're afraid they'll be thrown out of the network and it will hurt their lobbying or access to information or whatever their niche is." Choate says electing Perot is the only way to uproot business-as-usual in Washington. He told Perot last year, "My God, if you run, I'll support you." Since then, he's spoken at pro-Perot rallies.

Rollins had more to lose than Choate. His friend Vin Weber, a GOP representative from Minnesota, says Rollins was more than making ends meet as a Washington consultant. "Ed was making $600,000 or $700,000 a year without Perot," Weber says. And he and Weber had talked about setting up a political consulting firm in Washington after the election. (Weber is quitting Congress.) That's now in jeopardy. But what made Rollins hesitate when Perot called was his wife's job at the Bush White House. Sherrie Rollins wanted to stay, and urged him to say no to Perot. Finally she relented, and decided to hand in her resignation to Bush personally and see what happened. She hoped he might ask her to stay in spite of her husband's apostasy. Bush didn't ask. Washington doesn't work that way. •

Clinton's bum rap.

RFK ENVY

By Mickey Kaus

He's no Bobby Kennedy. That seems to be the verdict on Bill Clinton. The judgment is based on a comparison of Clinton's utterances following the Los Angeles riots with Kennedy's speeches twenty-four years ago, after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Hadn't Kennedy, on hearing the news that King was dead, gone into a black ghetto neighborhood in Indianapolis and given what David Halberstam (among others) called "perhaps the best speech of his life"? Didn't Clinton, offered a similar moment by history, dither? He was urged to fly immediately to Los Angeles, according to one report, but "delayed going in a way that his hero, the late Senator Robert Kennedy, would not have done." Worse, Clinton then "hedged," sending law-and-order signals to pacify whites and outrage-at-the-King-verdict signals pitched to blacks—mere campaign "babble," as Ronald Steel put it ("The Bobby Gap," TNR, May 25). There was a brief attempt to have Clinton actually travel to the Indianapolis site where Kennedy spoke, but even that idea, wrote Elizabeth Drew, "reveals ... the difference between those two men."

Clinton and his claque brought all this on themselves by self-consciously promoting the Bobby analogy. But it's still very unfair to Clinton. A Democratic presidential candidate in 1992 cannot, and should not, say what Kennedy said in 1968. And in many ways Clinton's post-riot speeches compare favorably with Kennedy's famous addresses.

Nothing Clinton said in April of this year could possibly have been as dramatic as Kennedy's April 1968 appearances. Kennedy had been urged to call off his Indianapolis rally by the local police chief, who feared violence. He went anyway. The crowd had not heard about King's killing. Kennedy told them, and amid the gasps delivered a short, spontaneous, emotional plea for integration and racial reconciliation, which was broadcast nationwide. Even as he spoke, however, riots were breaking out in other cities. The next day Kennedy gave a more scripted talk to a Cleveland business group, decrying the riots but also attacking "another kind of violence ... the violence of institutions; indifference and inaction and slow decay. This is the violence that afflicts the poor...."

If anybody else had delivered these speeches in 1968, they would not have had much resonance. It's not just that Kennedy had inherited his brother's "mantle." (In Indianapolis he made a rare, moving reference to JFK's assassination.) It was also that the speeches seemed to mark the culmination of Kennedy's transformation from a "ruthless" attorney general who moved too slowly on civil rights into a passionate social activist. There were plenty of Democrats attacking "indifference and inaction" in 1968. But they weren't Bobby Kennedy.

More important, today it's hardly enough for a presidential candidate to repeat Kennedy's simple, uplifting sentiments. ("We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times. We've had difficult times in the past.") When Kennedy spoke, the processes that would produce today's largely black underclass—the exodus of jobs and the middle class from the ghettos, the welfare explosion among those who remained—were already quite visible. But there was still hope that they might be reversed through "community action" and "community development," two ideas Kennedy championed. Decades later it's clear that those strategies failed. The culture of the underclass is now so

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entrenched it seems self-perpetuating.

Would we really want Clinton, in 1992, to blandly blame the riots, or the deeper social problem they reflect, on racism and the "violence of institutions"? Is it "institutions" that are gunning down young black men with Uzis in South-Central L.A. or intimidating teachers at ghetto high schools? There is no longer much hope that conventional government initiatives—jobs and loans instead of "indifference and inaction"—will transform communities where 80 percent of the children are born out of wedlock. Likewise, there is little hope of ending what Kennedy called the "vanity of our false distinctions among men" as long as middle-class fears of ghetto-poor blacks are justified by both statistics and everyday experience.

Clinton had to grapple with these complexities; he did it conscientiously and competently. Yes, he hedged. (Kennedy hedged too: throughout the 1968 Indiana primary he was accused of trimming to appease law-and-order whites.) Yes, Clinton took a while to react. His first post-riot speech, in Alabama on April 30, was largely a rehash of his earlier campaign themes. ("I'll try to pass family leave"—as if that has anything to do with the underclass.) But by May 5, when he addressed a group of newspaper publishers, Clinton had worked up a response that was substantial and even inspiring.

In that speech, Clinton calls racial division one of the country's "two great problems that must be addressed." (The other is economic competitiveness.) He specifically traces this division to the problems of urban ghettos. Clinton acknowledges the gains since the '60s—the civil rights revolution, the ascendance of black mayors—but he also notes that many of those mayors preside over "a permanent underclass caught in a culture where children cannot imagine the future we want them to live. Where most of the income comes from government checks and drug deals." Clinton even comes close to honesty on the question of race and crime, noting that "too many people think that violence has a black face, that is what is consistent either with their experiences or what they see on the news...." Blacks, for their part, "know that violence too often has a black face...."

Clinton can't resist a partisan swipe at the White House for blaming ghetto poverty on liberal social programs, but he immediately says, "I don't care anymore who's to blame. There's plenty of blame to go around." He then offers a series of substantial reforms: local development banks, neighborhood policing, allowing parents to choose among public schools. Finally, Clinton argues, "we must break the permanent culture of dependence which embraces 20 to 25 percent of those on public assistance." Clinton would offer welfare mothers education, child care, medical coverage, better child support, and an increase in the "earned income tax credit" for those who take low-wage jobs. But then he would limit welfare payments. "After a certain length of time on welfare, if there are no private sector jobs, people should do community service work and be employees, not recipients of a check. We must break the culture of poverty."

The first thing to be said about this speech is that, in substance and sophistication, it goes far beyond anything President Bush has had the guts to propose. It also goes well beyond anything Robert Kennedy had time to propose. Kennedy resisted liberal pressure to endorse a "guaranteed income," preferring a jobs program to a bigger dole. But in 1967 he also led the Senate opposition to imposing even mild work requirements on welfare mothers. It would have been almost unthinkable, in the guilt-heavy liberal atmosphere of 1968, for a Democrat seeking black support to talk about the need to "break the culture of poverty." Kennedy didn't. Clinton does, at some lingering risk of being accused of "blaming the victim."

Of course Kennedy's speeches are in some respects more satisfying. They have a tragic sense ("It is not the end of violence; it is not the end of disorder"), and they are more comforting for it. Clinton still seems the man with a nifty solution to every problem—an attitude that helps lend his speech its only false note, a vague plea for "community-based, non-bureaucratic, public-private partnerships." But most of the invidious comparisons between Clinton and Kennedy cannot, I think, be traced to any failure of Clinton's. 1992 is not 1968 (however different 1992 might have been if Kennedy had lived). The current talk about the superiority of Kennedy's speeches mainly reflects a longing for the simpler, more hopeful time in which he gave them. •

The Mafia's nemesis goes down.

THE SICILIAN

By Rachel Ehrenfeld

Bleary-eyed, I reached for the jingling phone. It was pitch black at midnight in my Palermo hotel. At the other end of the line was the unmistakable strong and husky voice of Giovanni Falcone. "Be on the first plane out of Palermo. Move now," he said without identifying himself, and hung up. I jumped out of bed, collected my baggage without turning on the light, and ran five flights downstairs. A sleepy night clerk stared at me when I asked to check out but didn't seem surprised.

The elegant Grande Albergo delle Palme, where Maupassant stayed on pilgrimage and Wagner composed his last bars of *Parsifal*, suddenly looked inhospitable. I had arrived the morning before on a sunny March day in 1987 to interview Falcone, the chief prosecutor of Palermo, about the phenomenon of narco-terrorism.

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Falcone had just concluded the "maxi-trial" that sent 342 members of the Sicilian Mafia to prison. Back in 1987 he had already earned a reputation as the staunchest opponent of the Mafia in the Italian judiciary. His work was not wildly popular among politicians, but he had the crucial support of the then minister of interior and now president of the Italian Republic, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro.

Falcone, in his late 40s at the time, was an energetic, barrel-chested man with the penetrating gaze of a Tibetan terrier. A native of Palermo, he went to local schools and trained himself in the study of white-collar crime, realizing that the money trail was the weak link of organized crime. As a bankruptcy judge, he investigated the connection of Sicilian Social Democratic politicians to Michele Sindona, the banker whose tangled connections inspired the plot of *The Godfather III.*

It was not easy to get access to Falcone, but Interior Minister Scalfaro helped open the door. I arrived early at the fortresslike Palace of Justice, surrounded by armored cars and machine-gun-toting guards, because I had been warned that it would take extra time to pass through the security for his office. He worked in a virtual cell, windowless and reinforced with concrete capable of withstanding bazooka fire.

He declared immediately that the biggest problem he faced was not from the Mafia, but from the corrupt politicians who were paid by it. He described political harassment during the "maxi-trial" and the attempts to assassinate him. We spoke about the Syrian government's involvement in drug and arms trafficking with the Sicilian Mafia, and he pulled out files to illustrate the ties. One of the names I heard from him for the first time was Munzir al-Qassar, the Syrian arms and drug dealer who was arrested in Madrid on June 5 on charges of involvement in international terrorism, possession of illegal weapons, and falsification of documents. Falcone also mentioned an investigation into the activities of the notorious Rifaat al-Assad, brother of the Syrian president. And he revealed developing connections between the local Mafia and the Colombian drug cartels.

Even at that stage he was concerned about Italy's role, both as supplier and as middleman, in the shipment of arms to Iraq and Libya. He described Leopard tanks and frigates that passed through the port of Palermo, en route from Portugal to Qaddafi and Saddam Hussein, in spite of an international arms embargo on Libya. He also told me that plutonium had been sent through Palermo from Rome to Baghdad for the Iraqi nuclear program.

He went on to describe the huge sums laundered through the construction industry in Sicily and the Bourse in Milan. Gold, he said, played a major role. There were more registered gold dealers in Palermo than in all of Switzerland, but when he checked the rolls, he recognized that many of the names on the list belonged to long-dead local citizens. Drug profits, Falcone said, went to purchase arms; some for local use but most for export to Arab countries. The Eastern bloc, he said, was working in cahoots with the Sicilian Mafia; the Communist regimes assisted the drug traffickers in return for help with arms smuggling and money laundering. "Narcoterrorism," he declared, "is an international economic, political, and social phenomenon, and until real international cooperation is instituted it will get worse, and democratic institutions will be in danger."

Falcone shared this unpopular and courageous outlook with his boss, Scalfaro. The grandfatherly, deeply religious Scalfaro is renowned for his personal integrity. He pioneered initiatives for European and American cooperation against narcoterrorism and was the most outspoken political leader about the evils of this trade. He led Italian law enforcement in the extraordinarily successful "Pizza Connection" investigations with U.S. authorities led by Rudolph Giuliani (at that time the D.A. for the Southern District of Manhattan). Scalfaro, like Falcone, revealed many important details about the international network of the drug traffickers. Like Falcone, he was a crusader against the connected evils of organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering, and terrorism.

When I returned to Rome, Scalfaro had only praise for Falcone, his "brave soldier in the fight against the Mafia." By then, Falcone had sent word that his midnight warning resulted from intelligence that members of the Mafia were making inquiries about the foreign researcher who had met with him earlier that day. It is possible that his warning made it possible for me to write about him today.

Falcone was unable to save himself. His success in the "maxi-trial" foundered on political interference. Most of the 342 convictions were later overturned. He resigned his post in Palermo last year, stating that he was paralyzed by constant sniping from Rome. By that time he had become the target of a campaign to besmirch his name.

But he continued to receive constant death threats. A year ago, as he walked on the beach close to his home in Palermo, a bomb exploded nearby. After this incident, the government moved him to Rome, where he was not given much to do. But Falcone continued his investigations into the far-reaching tentacles of the Mafia. Just before he returned to Palermo, he indicated that he was about to expose the connections between the financial scandal in Milan, the Socialist Party (especially Bettino Craxi), the Mafia, and the Swiss banking industry. But he never reached Palermo. On May 24, as he started on the twenty-mile drive from Punta Raisi Airport in an armored car accompanied by his wife and three armed bodyguards, someone detonated a ton of dynamite on a beach by the highway. No one survived the blast.

Falcone was known as a "living data bank" on the Mafia and its worldwide activities. But his death was not in vain. It precipitated the election of Scalfaro as president of Italy. Like Falcone, Scalfaro knows the roots of the Mafia lie not in its romantic past but in its huge illegal cash flow and the political power it buys. Scalfaro

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stood behind the former Italian banking commissioner in his public plea to the bankers "to do something against money laundering ... before the Mafia takes over the Italian economy." At present, according to estimates, the Italian Mafia generates at least $200 billion annually.

With the death of Falcone, the Mafia has struck a heavy blow against democracy in Italy. "It was an unquestionable victory over the state and its laws," said Pino Arlacchi, the well-known Mafia expert. President Scalfaro may be Italy's last hope. But does he know too much also?

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Post-Soviet bliss I.

FACTS ON FILE

By Paul Quinn-Judge

MOSCOW

On December 15, 1988, a few days after Mikhail Gorbachev won the hearts of the West with his speech to the United Nations in New York, the Soviet Communist Party leadership met to upgrade the bugging of Western journalists. The Secretariat was presented with a top secret memorandum signed by Alexander Kapto, deputy head of the Central Committee's Ideology Department, urging that it modernize the resources available to Glavlit, the official censors. The modernization was needed in order to tap into new Western computers and faxes. "Without the corresponding renewal of its technical base, the special service [of Glavlit] will not be able to fully undertake its assigned functions," the document warned. The Secretariat unanimously backed the appeal. Other leaders who signed off on the document include Alexander Yakovlev, the most respected and daring of the Gorbachevites.

Glavlit's request comes from the Special File, the personal archives of Communist Party leaders—their own repository for the secrets they cherished or perhaps feared the most, and which were never intended to see the light of day. (The documents have not been published yet in Russia: a small selection of them was made available to me recently by a person working on the archives.)

The Yeltsin administration is working through the file, preparing to release a careful selection of the material. So far officials have come up with information on a wide variety of unsavory dealings, from Soviet support of terrorists to links with the extreme nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky. This research is motivated by a desire to destroy the Communist Party and expose Gorbachev once and for all. Yeltsin and his aides are convinced that the now-banned Communist Party could yet provide a powerful base for an authoritarian movement that would try to restore the old regime. And they are obsessed with the idea that Gorbachev might somehow make a comeback. Yeltsin supporters feel that a hearing by Russia's constitutional court on the legality of the ban, now scheduled for July, will decide the Party's future.

A few weeks ago Yeltsin's aides began to assemble the material for the prosecution. Gennady Burbulis, Russia's secretary of state and probably Yeltsin's closest associate, called in a small group of specialists, gave them piles of documents from the Special File—tens if not hundreds of thousands of documents, dating back at least to the '20s—and told them to get working.

"It's a small world," one of the specialists said later. "Burbulis has been given Suslov's office." Mikhail Suslov, ideology chief under Leonid Brezhnev and Yuri Andropov, was one of the last Stalinists, a grim, stooped figure sometimes known as the Grand Inquisitor. The specialists were told that there were some documents the administration has no intention of releasing. The archives contained material on arms supplies to the IRA, one of Burbulis's colleagues said, but they would not release the documents for fear of reprisals against Russian diplomats. And to avoid embarrassing an ally, they would not be making available documents on KGB financial support for Indira Gandhi and other members of her family, including her son Rajiv.

Some documents provide proof that the Soviets did indeed give active support to terrorists in the 1970s. Another, dated August 28, 1969, and stamped top secret, shows Andropov demurely telling Brezhnev that the KGB has the capacity to turn out "up to 20,000 Muslims" in an anti-American demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. Others, however, show how recently—even under Gorbachev—the Soviet Union was still a military aggressor. They report the massive flow of weaponry that was still being provided to Afghanistan in 1990—96,000 rifles, tactical rockets, and a promise of MIG-29s the following year.

Certainly the guiltiest secret that has turned up so far concerns the top leadership's knowledge of direct links with and support for one of the busiest terrorist groups of the 1970s, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The paper trail starts in 1974. A two-page memorandum from Andropov to Brezhnev, dated April 23, reveals that since 1968 the KGB had been working with Wadia Haddad, a member of the Political Bureau and head of the Foreign Operations department of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The key words—Haddad's name, his function, the country involved—were all added by hand in spaces left blank in the original typewritten version. "During a meeting in April of this year with the KGB resident in Lebanon, Wadia Haddad laid out the PFLP's long-term program of sabotage and terrorism," the letter says.

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The program included "actions against U.S. and Israeli personnel in third countries" aimed at obtaining "reliable information about the plans and intentions of the USA and Israel." It also called for "sabotage and terrorist activities on the territory of Israel." The PFLP was planning a series of "special operations," including several aimed at oil storage facilities in Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and Hong Kong, Andropov told Brezhnev. Haddad was asking for "certain forms of special technical resources" necessary for sabotage operations. "Inform comrades Suslov, Podgorny, Kosygin, Grechko, Gromyko," says a note in an unknown but authoritative hand, running diagonally at the top of the page. Podgorny at the time was president, Kosygin premier, Grechko defense minister, and Gromyko, as ever, minister of foreign affairs.

A one-page letter dated May 16, 1975, informed Brezhnev that fifty-three automatic rifles, fifty pistols—"ten of them fitted with silencers"—and 34,000 rounds of ammunition had been delivered at night, by dead drop, off the coast of Aden. The weapons were of foreign origin, Andropov said, and only Haddad knew where they came from. A drop had been made "in conference with a decision of the Central Committee of the CPSU." Haddad, an early pioneer of the plane hijack, is said to have had links with a wide network of terrorist organizations, including the Baader-Meinhof group and the Japanese Red Army. Six months after he received the KGB weapons, he is said by Israeli sources to have masterminded the attack on OPEC headquarters in Vienna. He died in East Germany in 1978.

The revelations that have emerged so far about the Gorbachev era show a leader clearly cooperating with Party hard-liners. Take an appeal from the new, reformist German Party chief Gregor Gysi to Gorbachev in March 1991. The Wall was already down, and Gysi's Party was reduced to a rump of true believers. But the German Party's archives had been taken over by the Kohl government, and Gysi was desperate. The files should either be returned to their rightful owners or destroyed, he told a senior Soviet official, Valentin Falin. Publication would be a catastrophe: the archives provided details of financial aid given to illegal Communist parties by the East Germans. The document noted that Gorbachev had once urged Helmut Kohl not to publish the archives. Could he not raise the subject again in a few days' time, when Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher visited? There is also evidence that in January 1990 Gorbachev authorized secretly loaning the remnants of the Polish Party more than a million dollars.

The leaking of all this explosive material is no accident. Yeltsin has made it clear that he bitterly objects to the way Gorbachev continues to speak out on domestic politics. The Special File papers may well be a way to shut Gorbachev up. It's not inconceivable that Yeltsin will offer Gorbachev a deal: political silence in return for the non-publication of some of the more embarrassing documents. If this does not happen, we are probably destined to see a steady stream of revelations over the next few months that will bespatter a number of respected former leaders such as Yaklovlev and Shevardnadze. More importantly, Yeltsin's political lieutenants, who have never hidden their contempt for Gorbachev, will be given the freedom to dig out the documents that depict the last Soviet leader's compromises, improvisations, and cover-ups as he lurched toward August 1991.

PAUL QUINN-JUDGE is Moscow correspondent of *The Boston Globe.*

Post-Soviet bliss II.

CURIOUS GEORGIA

By Simon Sebag Montefiore

TBILISI, GEORGIA

Stalin is once again on Georgians' lips because another Georgian, who also became a powerful, world-famous Bolshevik in Moscow, has returned here. Bereft of his Soviet legions, Eduard Shevardnadze, formerly the Soviet foreign minister, is the emperor who has lost his clothes and come home naked. He returned to Tbilisi not only to save the homeland he abandoned for Moscow's Communist Politburo and the world stage, but also to save his own career, which had disappeared along with his master, Gorbachev, and his empire, the USSR. He is now the unelected president of the State Council.

For Westerners he is the very face of Soviet liberalism; for Georgians he was until recently the direct successor of Stalin and Beria. He won his sinister spurs first as a cruel KGB boss and then as a ruthless Communist Party chief of Georgia during the '70s (Brezhnev cracked down brutally on any Georgian nationalism); he was notorious as a Russian quisling with no regard for Georgian culture or the rights of the individual. Indeed, in December the now deposed President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, his sunken eyes glittering unnaturally, told me in his beleaguered office in the parliament building that Shevardnadze was "orchestrating coups against independent Georgia"; people in the street told me that they would shoot "the Bolshevik puppet" if he so much as darkened the doorstep of Georgia.

But now Tbilisi is grateful for the return of the "silver fox." Georgia's revered capital was burned and scarred during the civil war that exploded at the end of last year: a veteran dissident (who had often been jailed and reportedly tortured by none other than Shevardnadze), Gamsakhurdia, a nationalist professor with a Hitlerian mustache, was elected president by a stunning 87 per-

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cent. But he then adopted the powers and language of his Bolshevik predecessors in the name of free Georgia; he ranted at his opponents, calling them "bandits and criminals." His prime minister, Tengiz Sigua, and the commander of the National Guard, Tengiz Kitovani, rebelled and fought their way down Rustaveli Avenue over Christmas to drive the tyrannical Gamsakhurdia from power.

Georgia, unlike most of the other newly independent republics, has no need to create its national culture out of nothing. It is a romantic country steeped in legends, history, culture, and adventure: Jason came here with his Argonauts to find the Golden Fleece; the Romans called it "Colchis," famous as the most beautiful land on earth; its Christian kingdom was ruled over by a single dynasty, the Bagrations, via the heroic Queen Tamar and the aptly named King Hercules, until Czar Alexander I seized it in 1801. This is a country where every brigand or schoolgirl can recite whole stanzas of the national poem, "The Knight in the Panther Skin," by the medieval bard Rustaveli. In Tbilisi virtually every street is named for some poet or novelist who wrote in the Georgian language.

Tbilisi is partly a small Italianate university town on fiesta, partly a feverish Oriental city on the verge of murder, mayhem, and vengeance. Once elegant Rustaveli Avenue, with its charred museums and theaters, is architecturally czarist Russian; the burned-out parliament, where Gamsakhurdia made his last stand, has the gigantic concrete-pillared facade of Socialist grandeur, behind which lies the very seminary where a peasant boy from Gori, later to achieve fame as Stalin, trained for the priesthood. Beyond the czarist center and inside the ring of ghastly "Khrushchev" housing estates, old Tbilisi is a gorgeous city of hills, cobbled lanes, and picturesque houses weighed down by cascades of balconies and vines.

For all its problems, Georgia is also the most tolerant country in the area. When I visit one of the city's two synagogues, Josif Yakobashvili, an old Jewish war hero with lines of medals pinned to his baggy brown suit, sipping coffee on the ancient Sephardic synagogue's veranda, is most insulted when I ask if the Jews here have ever been oppressed: "We are descendants from the Mountain Jews of Roman times. In all that time since, we have never been persecuted. These Georgians are not like Russians or Germans, you know. Georgians are *civilized* people with *culture!*"

In this land of private armies, fought over for centuries by Russia, Persia, and Turkey, Shevardnadze, now 64, faces the real test of his career. He has managed to undo some of Gamsakhurdia's damage, garnering recognition by fifty-five countries and visits by German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and, recently, Secretary of State James Baker. But there are no George Bushes or Jim Bakers in Shevardnadze's own country. In Ruritanian Georgia, everything is flamboyant, surreal, and somewhat absurd. The politicians here are half scholar, half bandit. The fallen Gamsakhurdia, who still lurks over the border in Chechen-Ingushia, is the son of Georgia's favorite novelist this century. His father habitually wore medieval Georgian costume even in the darkest days of Stalin's purges. The ex-president looks the very image of the late comic Peter Sellers playing the role of the dictator of a Caucasian nation.

Or take the winning coalition of gun-toting professors, artisans, and partisans who overthrew Gamsakhurdia: the commander of the National Guard is Kitovani, a bear of a man, who looks like General Norman Schwarzkopf and bestrides Tbilisi, wielding a submachine gun and wearing a beret. He is a sculptor by vocation, a soldier by chance, an avowed democrat by persuasion, and a greedy black-marketeer by reputation. The urbane ex-Prime Minister Sigua, in Tbilisi's glamorous tradition, looks the image of film star Omar Sharif. And Vadja Adamia, who personally leads his own private army of Georgian troops against the Russian-backed Ossetians in the mountains, was a practicing dentist until he took to battle; now the only anesthetic he offers is a bullet from his Kalashnikov. Adamia is an interesting character in this Ruritanian comic opera: he is a parliamentary deputy and a mustachioed, aquiline-nosed, pot-bellied field general. The intense guerrilla war in Ossetia is one of the many ethnic struggles that broke out once the Pax Sovieticus was over. Now it is forgotten, overshadowed by the larger-scale war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

When I ask Adamia where his men get their weapons, he laughs, spinning his pistol in circles on his desk as if he were playing spin the bottle: "Both we and the Ossetians buy our weapons from the Soviet army. Or else we rent them for the night. We used to rent their tanks overnight!" He shrugs at this classic Georgian idea, the "rent-a-tank" market. "It's more economical," he says, "but the prices have gone up too fast. Now we must build our own tanks with armored tractors, which work well in the mountains. Pah! Such inflation!"

The civil war may be over now—elections will be held in the fall—but the remote, bloody war for south Ossetia, an ancient part of Georgia called Samachablo, continues with May's massacre of thirty-five Ossetians by Georgians, perhaps by my friend Adamia's irregulars, perhaps by Gamsakhurdia's men making trouble.

Ten miles north of Stalin's birthplace in Gori (Trotsky always called his nemesis "the crafty Ossetian"), I visit a village where three Georgian boys have recently been killed in an Ossetian ambush. I am invited warmly to join the funeral supper. Vines growing on trellises cover the village's green lanes; a statue of Stalin stands outside the village school; near the church, in a field, there is a tree with the Georgian flag fluttering in the wind. Hunting rifles and Kalashnikovs lean against it. The snowy peaks of the Caucasus, the border of Asia and Europe, support the blue sky.

The male villagers, dark-skinned, black-eyed, unshaven mountaineers, with manes of white hair and handsome, craggy faces, sit in the cold open air around

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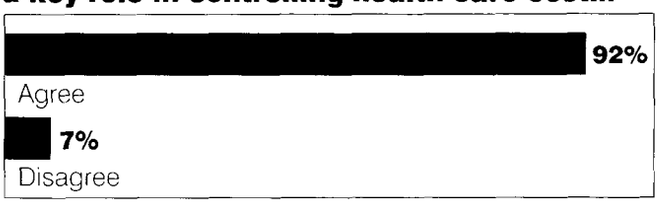

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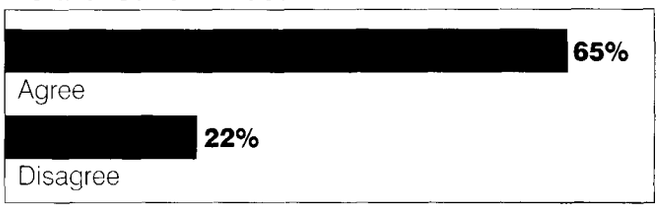

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a long table laden with wine and Georgian delicacies. I join them, resting my feet on a heap of grass and flowers under the table. They signal to me. We all stand up. They ask me to speak via my translator. I raise my tumbler, filled with rich red wine produced by these very fields. I am afraid to say the wrong thing. The flinty eyes watch me and wait patiently. At last I say in memory of the murdered boys: "We shall not forget them." They nod, and we all pour our wine onto the pile of flat *lavashi* bread in the middle of the table.

Then the funeral feast begins: we eat the hot *khachapuri* cheese cake, *lobio* bean soup, *satsivi* chicken in its sauce of spices and nuts. We get more and more drunk as the *tamada*, the traditional toastmaster, who is also the father of one of the dead, raises his glass horn brimming with wine to declaim toasts of sadness, joy, and romance: to Georgia, America, and Britain, to love, to freedom, and to the dead.

My translator, a local militiaman who still wears a tattered "Soviet" uniform (though the buttons have fallen off), grasping a Kalashnikov automatic apparently held together by bandages (he says it is the best gun in the world, adding reverently: "It shoots well under water!"), whispers: "It's traditional to eat on the graves. That way the dead eat, drink, and laugh with us." "Where are the graves?" I ask. "Why, right here!" he says, pointing under the table to the piles of grass on which I rest my feet. That is Georgia: the land where they drink with the dead.

SIMON SEBAG MONTEFIORE is the author of *King's Parade*, just published by Penguin Books.

Post-Soviet bliss III.

ONE NATION UNDER BORIS

By Stephen Sestanovich

Boris Yeltsin's Foreign Ministry recently found Latvia guilty of a strange offense: "deliberate disrespect for the Russian language." Estonia was accused of practicing "apartheid" against its Russian minority. These harsh charges reflect one of the most important developments of post-Soviet politics: Russian liberalism increasingly speaks the language of nationalism. And it's not just talk. Russia's parliament voted last month to nullify Ukraine's sovereignty over the Crimean peninsula, bringing closer a confrontation that will be very hard to control.

To many Westerners it is a shock to discover that Russian liberals are Russian nationalists too, and in their shock many conclude that such people cannot really be liberals. In fact, one ism's fate is inseparable from that of the other. A Western-style order will take hold in Russia only if its supporters show that they understand national traditions, values, and pride. Russian liberals hope to define these traditions in their own fashion, emphasizing cultural pluralism, tolerance, and a proud—but not too bristly—patriotism.

The conservative opposition that is now forming in Russia has other ideas. Conservatives believe that nationalism is *their* issue, and their most potent weapon for bringing down the current government. They claim that liberal reformers have turned a mighty state into an international charity case and are importing economic and political institutions that have no basis in Russia's past. Conservative slogans harp on the issue of self-respect. Yeltsin, they say, is the "chief slave of the new world order"; his foreign minister "lacks even minimum virility."

In this struggle to appropriate Russian patriotic symbols, many liberals clearly feel on the defensive. Once communism was defeated, Sergei Stankevich, one of Yeltsin's most thoughtful advisers, wrote recently, "it turned out that victorious democracy had no conception of the organic life of Russia." The solution he proposed was a vast analytical enterprise: to "find, interpret, and articulate the idea of Russia."

Yet proving that their goals have a real Russian pedigree is the easy part of what liberals have to do. From Peter the Great on, most Westernizing reformers have been nationalists too, and Yeltsin himself has had no trouble uniting these traditions. When he was elected chairman of the Russian parliament two years ago, one of his first acts was to push through a "declaration of Russian sovereignty"—a challenge to Communist rule with a patriotic twist. Yeltsin's inauguration last year as Russia's first popularly elected president could have been a czar's coronation, with priestly blessings and evocations of a glorious past.

Liberals in search of nationalist legitimacy argue that

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Russia was the single biggest victim of the Soviet era. Its wealth was squandered, its history distorted, its culture defiled. In this light, the breakup of the USSR is supposed to represent national rebirth, not national humiliation—and liberals want to get the credit. Yeltsin made precisely this case at April's session of the Congress of People's Deputies, adding: "Patriotism and democracy are indivisible." His aides use the same nationalist vocabulary. Although half-Lithuanian, Gennady Burbulis, Yeltsin's chief political strategist, talks a more "Russian" line than many of his critics. For him, the differences between the government and the opposition are virtually a matter of love of country. Those who block radical reform are, he says, "against sovereignty, against independence, against the regeneration of Russia."

BORIS YELTSIN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Playing at nationalist politics, however, is risky: liberals may arouse concerns that they cannot satisfy with inspirational talk alone. Yeltsin's robust rhetoric creates expectations that he then has to meet. The same speech in which he defended the patriotism of democrats also took some crowd-pleasing swipes at Russia's partners in the new Commonwealth, who are, he complained, always blaming Russia for the ills of the old Soviet order. "We have no intention," he declared, "of conducting a dialogue in which we take the role of the guilty party who has to justify himself for the sins of others."

Russia's dealings with most of its neighbors already show the marks of this new contentiousness. Andrei Kozyrev, Russia's foreign minister, whose first months in office seemed one long tour of great power capitals, estimates that he now spends 80 percent of his time handling relations with other Commonwealth states. And the issue that increasingly dominates Russian diplomacy also excites the most powerful nationalist emotions: the alleged mistreatment of ethnic Russian minorities in the former Soviet states. In talking about this problem, Kozyrev has adopted a tough pose. His job, he says, is to defend the rights of Russians "everywhere outside Russia," even if "forceful methods" are needed. Ironically, it is now Russian diplomats who are most likely to thunder about human rights violations, accusing their neighbors of discrimination against Russians on issues such as citizenship, education, and employment.

The new assertiveness of Russian diplomacy has not, by and large, gone beyond rhetorical confrontation. But one case, involving the Russian minority in the old Soviet republic of Moldavia, now Moldova, has already turned violent, becoming a painful lesson for liberals in how hard it is to keep a nationalist policy under control. In the eastern part of Moldova, local Russians last year proclaimed their own "Dniester Republic," named after the river that separates the region from the rest of Moldova. At the time, most Russian liberals dismissed the effort (correctly) as the work of Communists trying to exploit nationalism so as to hold on to power. Today, however, as fighting between the Moldovan militia and irregular Russian units intensifies, and Moldova debates whether to leave the Commonwealth and merge with Romania, Yeltsin's government has no choice but to support its fellow Russians. Kozyrev has had to spend much of this spring in meetings with the foreign ministers of Ukraine, Romania, and Moldova, patching together one shaky cease-fire after another.

Perhaps the best measure of the danger that conflicts like the Dniester war pose for Russian liberals is the growing number of people who are meddling in it. Several armed units of Cossack volunteers arrived on the scene early this year, proclaiming their duty to save Russian lives. Russian Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi showed up in April, denouncing the Moldovan government for "fascist genocide" against Russians and declaring that the Cossacks were absolutely right to intervene (this, at the very moment that Kozyrev was trying to negotiate their withdrawal!). Later the Russian Congress voted to demand that Russia adopt the objectives of the Dniester leaders in future talks. All the while, Russian forces stationed in Moldova were being drawn more deeply into the fighting. When

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Yeltsin announced at the end of May that he was pulling the troops out, his own defense minister corrected him: they'll leave when they're no longer needed.

Although liberals increasingly embrace nationalist goals, they continue to disagree with conservatives about how best to pursue them. Kozyrev insists that nationalist goals can be advanced by *inter*nationalist means. The same minority rights that so inflame Russian patriotic feeling are, he points out, protected by the U.N. Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, as well as by Russia's treaties with the other former Soviet states. Kozyrev insists that if the case can be clothed in the right international legal garb, then other countries will join Russia in pressuring human rights offenders.

Yet many nationalists rankle at the mere suggestion that Russia needs outside approval to defend its own people. Even liberal commentators snicker that Kozyrev regards the U.N. Charter as "holy scripture." And conservative spokesmen ridicule the idea of relying on multilateral diplomacy for timely help. As Mikhail Astafiev, leader of the center-right Constitutional Democrats, said of the Moldova case, "This is our country; we must defend our people."

Astafiev's remark reveals the deepest, perhaps unbridgeable, division between liberal and conservative nationalists. For the latter, Moldova is still "our country." Conservatives do not accept the boundaries that Russia inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and they say so. (Astafiev makes the point with a joke: "The USSR has never disappeared; it is just that the president's position is vacant and is temporarily occupied by James Baker.") To conservatives, the vulnerability of Russian communities beyond Russia's current borders only proves that the borders themselves are illegitimate.

Liberals have their own problems with the issue of territory. Most say they accept Russia's borders, but few are prepared to forswear all changes for all time. They point out that no Russian state has ever existed within the borders of today's Russia. But the reason so many liberals equivocate on this question is not that they reject the independence of other former Soviet states. It is that they *accept* it—and having done so, need to show that it does not involve unbearable costs. Similarly, when liberals express concern for Russian minorities, they are not threatening war against their neighbors, but trying to show that Russians who have become, in a common phrase, "foreigners against their will" will not suffer as a result.

The internal dilemmas of liberal nationalism are, in the best scenario, likely to be barely manageable; in the worst, uncontrollable. Nowhere is this risk greater than in the confrontation now building between Russia and Ukraine. Some of Yeltsin's advisers—like Vladimir Lukin, Russia's ambassador to the United States and formerly chairman of the parliament's foreign affairs committee—have argued that this conflict provides a chance to display liberal nationalism in its most muscular form. Lukin created a stir in February by proposing that Russia deliberately broaden the dispute over how to divide up the Soviet navy's Black Sea fleet. His recommendation: raise Russia's claim to the Crimean peninsula, which has been part of Ukraine since 1954 but is historically Russian. His motive, he acknowledged, was only in part to get the Ukrainians to back down in the fleet negotiations. Beyond this, Lukin predicted that a tough line with Ukraine would "bring forth a broad wave of support for the Russian leadership, and this will give us more time and opportunities to maneuver in the implementation of economic reform."

Since then the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine has come to center on Crimea, just as Lukin proposed, but it has also become much harder to control—the opposite of what he envisioned. Local organizations have fanned nationalist sentiment, and some polls suggest that the Crimean majority that voted for Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union last December has now become a majority favoring independence from Ukraine. In Russia too feelings have hardened: in a statement explaining its vote to declare the 1954 transfer of Crimea to Ukraine illegal, the parliament said that public opinion left it no choice.

Are liberals, then, losing their gamble with nationalism? They may yet do so, but so far even an emotional issue like Crimea shows how much liberals gain by preserving their nationalist credibility. Conservatives wanted the vote on 1954 to be a virtual declaration of war. Instead, the Yeltsin government managed to add an explicit renunciation of territorial claims against Ukraine, a call for "restraint," and an invitation to negotiate. This balanced result, which Kozyrev himself applauded, was possible only because liberals have not let themselves be cast as anti-nationalist. They have the credentials to resist extremism.

The same can be said about nationalism's impact on domestic political alignments. Conservatives boast that nationalist grievances are creating a unified opposition to the Yeltsin government, and it's true that the Democratic Russia bloc (which only last year was the country's principal anti-Communist political force) has suffered a series of defections over nationalist issues. Even so, recent events suggest that nationalism's real impact has been to keep the potential opposition divided.

Consider the actions of two figures who should be prime candidates for inclusion in an opposition alliance built around nationalist issues: Vice President Rutskoi and Nikolai Travkin, the leader of the large and well-organized Democratic Party of Russia. Both are unhappy with many elements of the government's program; both are known as strong nationalists. Yet both have distanced themselves from the conservative opposition. When the organizing session of what was intended as a unified movement of "patriotic forces" met in February, Travkin boycotted it and broke off relations with its sponsors, many of them former members of the Democratic Russia bloc, whom he labeled extremists. Rutskoi, who chose to address the meeting of "patriots," was then reproached by his own party for doing so and forced to apologize. A month

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later he and Travkin announced a merger of their parties so as to defend Yeltsin and his government against an anticipated conservative offensive.

The effort to unify the opposition to Yeltsin on nationalist principles has proved no more successful than any other attempt. At some point, of course, an acute nationalist grievance—a mishandled concession to Ukraine or, even worse, to Japan—could bring the government's many opponents together. But as long as its policies remain respectably nationalist in the eyes of people like Rutskoi and Travkin, a united opposition is far less likely to come into being. In these divisions among Russian nationalists lie hopes for a liberal Russia.

For all its political promise at home, however, liberal nationalism is likely to be a source of increasing difficulty in Russia's relations with the West. The West is uncomfortable with nationalism—especially when it seems to threaten civil order. Not all nationalists, of course, are disturbed by the outside world's disapproval. It only confirms what Russian conservatives believe anyway, that they have to go it alone because no one understands them. Liberal nationalists like Yeltsin are in a more awkward position: they have to show that Russia can join the West without compromising its national identity. Unlike their rivals, they fear that they will not succeed unless they are first understood. •

Bush's deferred banking crisis.

DECEMBER SURPRISE

By Michael Waldman

In 1988 savings and loan regulators embarked on a concerted campaign to keep the thrift crisis off the front pages until after the election. Using every trick in the book, they kept wobbly S&Ls alive with loosened rules, subsidized mergers, and tax breaks, rather than face an embarrassing and costly domestic crisis in an election year. A week after his inauguration, President Bush sent the first taxpayer rescue proposal to Congress. According to the Congressional Budget Office, delay in shutting down insolvent S&Ls before 1989 accounted for *$66 billion* of the $500 billion bailout tab.

In December 1992 voters may discover they've been had again. The untold story of this presidential election is how the Bush administration's bank regulators—frantically jiggering balance sheets here, juggling budget numbers there, and moving oh-so-slowly in seizing insolvent banks—have sought to postpone a commercial bank crisis until after November. Then, soon after the election, the administration will suddenly discover that there is—surprise!—a major banking crisis. Once again the delay will add hugely to the cost: the longer regulators let an insolvent bank stay open, the more it costs to pay out depositors, as losses get worse and more customers come in the door (often lured by extra-high interest rates). "It's a cover-up. Profoundly," says former thrift regulator Dan Brumbaugh, co-author of *The Future of American Banking*. "What one has to understand is that there's no benefit to anyone in the government—in the Congress, in the administration, or in the regulatory apparatus—to deal straightforwardly with the taxpayer and the voter, and therefore no one is."

The problems plaguing the commercial banks, like those of the thrifts, are the legacy of the speculative 1980s. Financial deregulation—including the uncapping of rates that could be paid on consumer accounts—led banks and S&Ls to search for ever riskier, ever more lucrative investments. Formerly stodgy banks poured billions into energy investments, funding corporate takeovers and leveraged buyouts, and most dramatically, office towers and shopping malls. Then, one after another, the bubbles burst. "See-through" office buildings have so clogged the market that the United States has enough office space to last another dozen years, according to an analysis by Salomon Brothers. Despite repeated false starts, the real estate deflation is not over. Just last month Olympia and York, the world's premier real estate development company, sought the protection of bankruptcy court, $15 billion in debt—most of it to banks.

Of the nation's 12,000 taxpayer-insured banks, most are healthy, even after two years of recession. But about 1,000 are on regulators' secret list of "problem" banks, those that may soon slide into insolvency (or may be there already). Ominously, the biggest banks, reeling from a decade of bad loans, are in the biggest trouble. The nation's largest, Citicorp, is particularly shaky. In the 1970s and 1980s, hell-bent to transform itself into a

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MICHAEL WALDMAN, director of Public Citizen's Congress Watch, is the author of *Who Robbed America? A Citizen's Guide to the Savings & Loan Scandal* (Random House).

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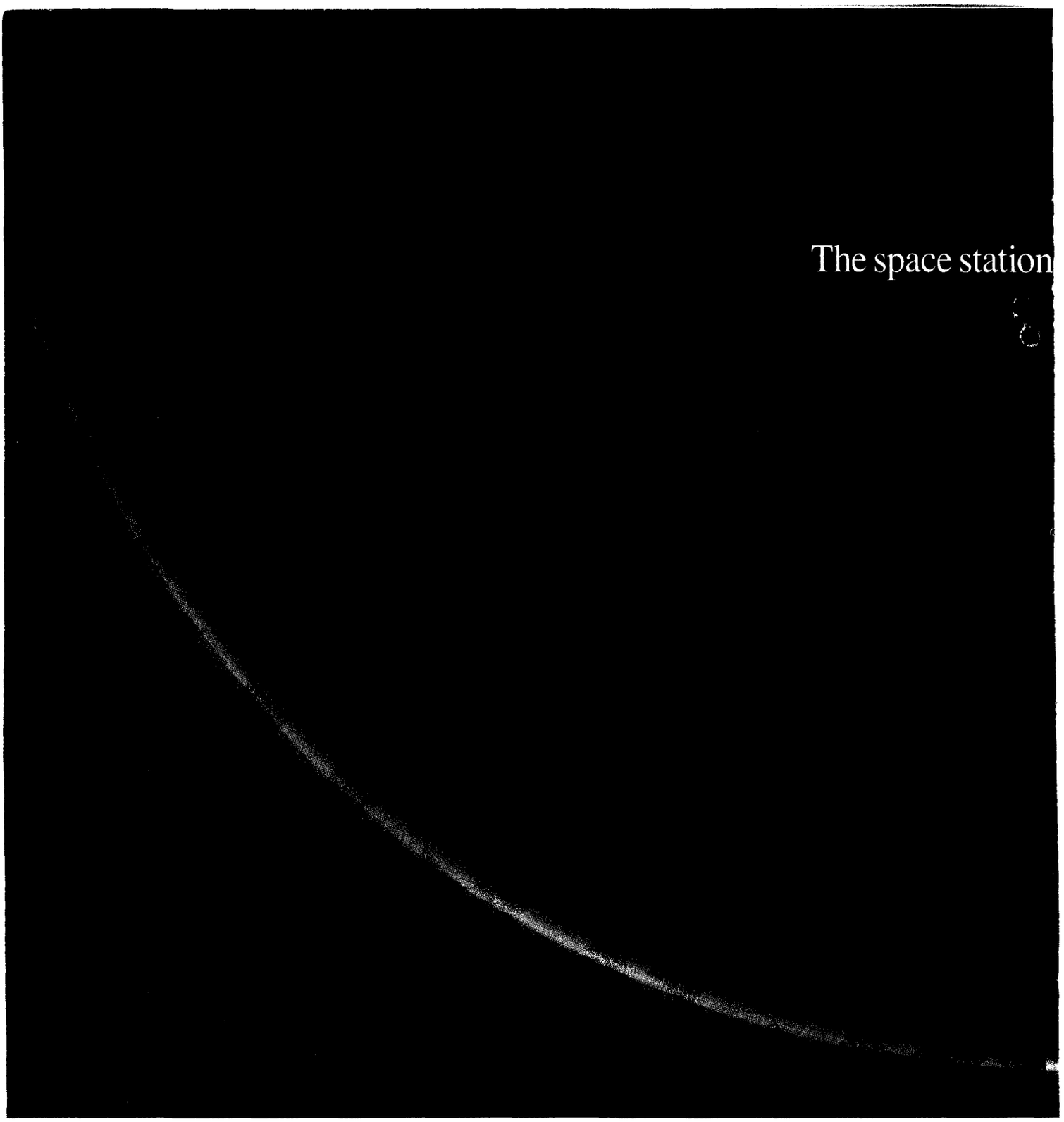

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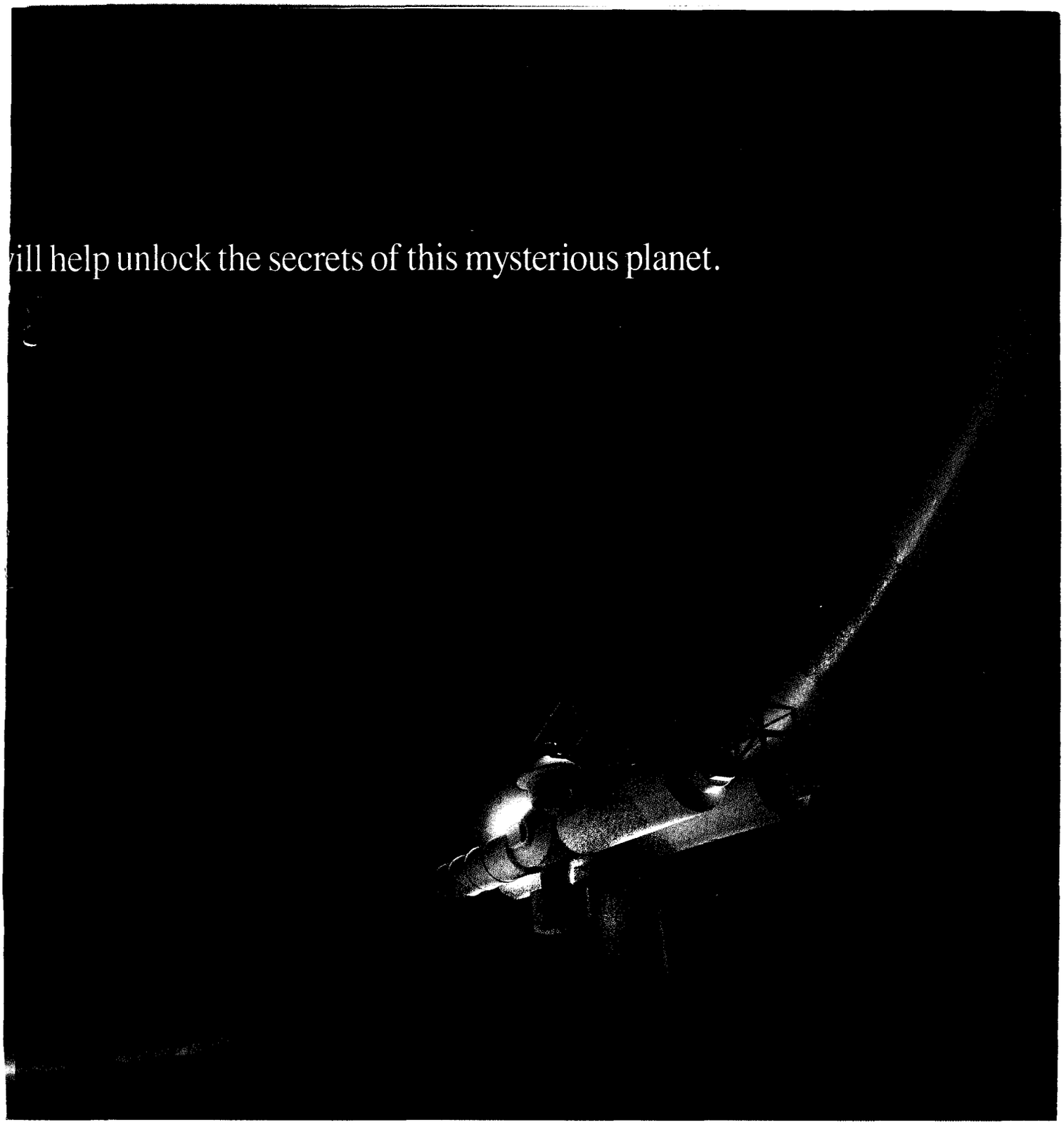

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BOEING

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global economic supermarket, it became addicted to deals. An elaborate holding company structure let it greatly increase its lending without an adequate cushion. As the economy contracted, Citicorp's balance sheet began to tilt southward as dramatically as its famous skyscraper roof. Last August House Energy and Commerce Committee chairman John Dingell declared that Citicorp was "technically insolvent," and in October it announced an $885 million quarterly loss. In the first quarter of 1992, Citicorp seemed to be on the rebound, but on closer examination its improved outlook came by counting one-time gains as operating profits. Unfortunately, Citicorp is more typical than atypical among the biggest banks.

In the last quarter of 1991, the banks on the FDIC's problem list had grown 26 percent (as measured by their assets), to $613 billion—meaning that bigger banks were in trouble. By the end of the year, the insurance fund that guaranteed deposits for customers at banks had, in contrast, dwindled to dangerously low levels. The FDIC told the Senate Banking Committee that it anticipated 200 bank failures in 1992, involving $86 billion in assets and costing $28.7 billion. The Office of Management and Budget was even more pessimistic. At President Bush's urging, Congress passed legislation authorizing bank regulators to borrow up to $70 billion to begin shutting down sick banks. When interest rates dropped and customers began borrowing again, the health of some banks improved, but few analysts think the recovery is complete.

This scenario has all the earmarks of a GOP electoral nightmare. When regulators seize a bank, it means bad headlines, consumer jitters, and economic dislocation. Moreover, each takeover costs money—bumping up the cost of the total bailout. And this time the beneficiaries wouldn't be the Sunbelt rogues of the S&L industry, many of them Democrats, but the starchy patricians who control the "money center" banks.

So top officials at the White House and Treasury Department have swung into action, mounting a yearlong campaign to postpone the inevitable—until after the election. Like a drinker who insists that the cure for a hangover is another round of Bloody Marys, administration officials have sought to address the banks' profligacy by ordering up another round of questionable debt and deregulation. Among the steps they have taken:

"The slows." That's the malady Abraham Lincoln identified in his generals who never attacked. Now it appears that bank regulators are dragging their feet when it comes to seizing and disposing of insolvent banks. Six months into the 1992 fiscal year, the administration had spent about $4.4 billion on bank resolutions, even though OMB had projected that it would need to spend $33 billion. "It's clear that the bank closures and resolutions have slowed down considerably in this fiscal year," CBO director Robert Reischauer told the Senate Banking Committee in April. Committee chairman Donald Riegle asked, "Does this tend to happen in four-year cycles?" "We'll have to call in a rocket scientist to answer that one," Reischauer amiably replied. "To the extent that [bank takeovers] that we expected to occur in fiscal year 1992 don't occur, we would expect them to then reappear in later fiscal years," he added.

Premium increases past due. Deposit insurance is supposed to be funded by the industry, and the $70 billion "loan" to replenish the bank insurance fund was to be paid back by the banks in the form of higher premiums for deposit insurance. Otherwise, the "loan" would turn into a de facto taxpayer bailout. But the administration has done everything it can to avoid raising the premiums. Having stampeded Congress into voting a "loan," the administration and its bank allies suddenly decided that there wasn't much of an emergency after all. The Treasury Department and bank lobbyists deluged the FDIC, urging a delay in the premium hike. Thomas "Lud" Ashley, head of the trade association that represents big banks, helped to lead the charge. A former Democratic congressman, Ashley has known Bush since their days as Skull and Bonesmen at Yale. More recently he raised up to $250,000 in undisclosed contributions for the Neil Bush legal defense fund—at the very moment the White House was drafting its bank reform bill. (The bill heavily favored Ashley's clients.)

The pressure paid off. Even though the taxpayer "loan" was made in November, FDIC chair William Taylor didn't try to engineer a premium increase until April. When he did, he was rebuffed by the other members of his five-person board. A month of arm-twisting ensued, and on May 7 Taylor tried again. This time his colleagues reluctantly agreed to hike the fees on banks, raising them from 23 cents per $100 of deposits to 28 cents. The agency's staff estimates, however, that this rate stands a 40 percent chance of being insufficient to pay back the taxpayers in full, and then over fifteen years.

The increase won't take place until—you guessed it—after the election, on January 1, 1993. Congress has already begun to hear whispered warnings from bankers that they won't be able to bear the premium hike. According to congressional sources, Bank of America, which pays more premiums than any other bank, has begun quietly lobbying for a reprieve, as has the American Bankers Association.

"I'll have those books cooked well done, thanks." The administration has also engineered some thirty-five rule changes that have the effect of helping the balance sheets of banks and thrifts without actually improving their condition. Individually, most of these changes can be justified with a straight face. Taken together, however, they amount to a government-sponsored cooking of the banking industry's books.

Are banks losing money on their loans used for LBOs and takeovers? (Mergermaniacs owed the top 100 banks $44 billion on these loans as of last September, and interest wasn't being paid on $5 billion worth. Some $1.1 billion of these are coming due this year.) No sweat: in January the Federal Reserve and other regulators

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announced that they would be taking a less stringent view of what constitutes a "highly leveraged transaction" loan, implying that banks can make more of them. Do banks hurt when they have to value real estate at its actual market price? Late last year regulators began allowing banks to take into account other subjective factors, such as long-term economic trends, when valuing real estate loans. Comptroller General Charles Bowsher, an accountant, warns that due to this change, "there will be more banks failing without reasonable warning, and the regulatory process will be severely hampered."

Numerous other accounting fixes have affected what counts as "capital." Banks must have $4 of capital for every $100 they lend out, so that there is a cushion in case the borrowers default. In recent months regulators have allowed banks to count as capital intangibles such as receivables from credit cards and income from mortgages, even though each of these is very unstable. "The way the regulators have nickeled and dimed the capital standards is disturbing," says Tom Schlesinger, director of the Southern Finance Project, who has detailed what he calls "drip, drip, drip deregulation." "They are being very creative in counting all sorts of funny money as real money."

We now know how the cover-up happened in 1988 when regulators hid the savings and loan debacle. That year the chief culprit was Federal Home Loan Bank Board chairman M. Danny Wall, who became known to his employees as "M. Danny Isuzu"—after the TV auto pitchman—because of the whoppers he told to Congress. While steadfastly denying that taxpayer funds would be needed, Wall frantically sold off 220 S&Ls under the "Southwest Plan." According to the House Banking Committee, buyers got $78 in assets and government subsidies for every $1 that they spent. This sleight of hand was so wasteful that it was later deemed most prudent to buy back the deals made by regulators.

This year it's harder to know the true balance sheets of the banks and whether the White House's hand is on the throttle. Bank regulatory agencies are notoriously secretive and operate under a unique exemption to the Freedom of Information Act; the White House claims executive privilege. So there's no incriminating paper trail of memos and letters, and we can't know precisely which banks should be taken over but are allowed to live on.

Plainly, however, the regulatory apparatus has been lurching and shuddering to the electoral clock. In December bank examiners were summoned to a closed-door conclave in Baltimore, where top Treasury Department officials accused them of being too tough. A week before the New Hampshire primary, officials announced a package of debt relief for borrowers from the failed Bank of New England. More significant, regulators have been suspiciously slow in acting to seize three huge Southern California S&Ls—HomeFed, CalFed, and GlenFed. The *Los Angeles Times* first reported in May 1991 that HomeFed was heading toward insolvency. By early fall there were widespread press reports of an imminent federal takeover. But regulators didn't act until this April, and then decided not to seize HomeFed. Instead, they looked for a buyer. The thrift is still open, losing money.

Among bank regulators, the administration's point man is Timothy Ryan, who was appointed director of the Treasury Department's Office of Thrift Supervision in 1990. "Ryan began his career in politics working for CREEP in 1972, and has worked in every Republican presidential campaign since then," said one congressional aide. "Including this one." Ryan led the fight against raising bank and S&L premiums on the FDIC board. In April he announced a package of deregulatory measures as part of the much ballyhooed regulatory moratorium, a rule freeze coordinated by Vice President Dan Quayle's Council on Competitiveness. Ryan has now been joined among bank regulators by the newly nominated comptroller of the currency, James Gilleran, who chaired the Bush-Quayle campaign in northern California in 1988.

Publicly, the Bush administration argues that its rule changes are designed to end the "credit crunch." Treasury Department officials have charged that flint-hearted regulators are forcing otherwise healthy banks to pull back on lending. But it's foolish to seek to induce a boom by letting banks and thrifts lend taxpayer-insured deposits to borrowers who can't pay back. And the slowly reviving economy will not be enough to save the day. The key sector for a banking recovery—real estate—is still in crisis. Some regions, such as Southern California, are just now feeling the full brunt of the recession. And improvement in the economy, or even in the overall health of the banking industry, doesn't necessarily spell recovery for those banks that are already insolvent due to past bad loans.

If the S&L debacle taught any lesson, it is this: delay in the takeover of an ailing bank often adds substantially to the ultimate cost. Failing financial firms often nosedive in a sort of insolvency spiral, gambling on ever riskier loans and paying extra-high interest rates to attract new customers. That's why financial experts now agree that it's better to take over a bank as soon as it becomes insolvent, or even before, than to wait for a miracle. They point to the Bank of New England, which regulators kept open last year long after it became insolvent in the hope that its malady would prove temporary. The delay swelled the bailout costs to $2.5 billion.

If history is any guide, the scenario will play out quite straightforwardly after the election. Regulators, able to postpone the inevitable no longer, will move in to seize high-profile banks—maybe a Citicorp, maybe some other stumbling giant. Cost estimates for the bailout will rise alarmingly. Bankers will moan that they can't afford a premium increase. Citizens will discover that the "loan" has been turned into a de facto taxpayer bailout, without any new votes being cast in Congress. In 1988 even an attentive public couldn't know what was being done to it. This time we will have only ourselves to blame. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Early Summer Round-Up

Lethal Weapon 3 (Warner Bros.). When I saw Fugard's *Master Harold ... and the Boys* at the Yale Rep in 1982, I was much struck by the two black actors in this three-character play. The first, with the larger role, was already well known and admirable, Zakes Mokae. But I went to the play twice chiefly to see the other black actor again. He was onstage almost constantly and had relatively little to say. I had never seen a better instance of an actor being *in* a scene, silent, without mugging; and he had one moment, which I won't describe here, of piercing pain. His name, new to me then, was Danny Glover.

By now Glover has become a fixture in American film, which means American consciousness, which means (in the film stratum) world consciousness. Alongside the only currently comparable black male actor, Morgan Freeman, Glover hasn't shown the same range, which may mean no more than that he hasn't yet been allowed to show it. But Glover has never made a false move any time I've seen him and even in a film like this—the third in a possibly interminable series—he manages to make some true moves.

He plays a Los Angeles detective, of course, and of course Mel Gibson returns as his partner, fresh from *Hamlet.* (Well, fairly fresh, as Noël Coward would have said.) Together the black and white pair go through their chases and fights and falls and recoveries with an air of address that they might use in telling children a wild tale with straight faces. Thus they manage to combine sufficient conviction with a touch of amiability.

Richard Donner, who has directed all of the series, keeps this latest one vrooming along. I missed No. 2 of the set; I went to No. 3 because of the recent L.A. catastrophe—to see if there was any connection. But, although one story strand involves black teenage gangs, it's merely a matter here of touching all bases. The film isn't really set in L.A.: it takes place in that never-never land where a man can fall twenty feet, land flat on his back, and get up in a few moments to punch again; where cars can chase one another against freeway traffic and no one in another vehicle is hurt.

Beautiful Dreamers (Hemdale). "Do you suppose in a thousand years from now people will be celebrating the birth of Walt Whitman as they are now the birth of Christ?" This question, framed at Christmas 1890 by one of Whitman's disciples, sets the pitch of adoration with which, in his later years, the poet was surrounded. None shared in it more fervently than a Canadian physician named Richard Maurice Bucke. Bucke's adventures with Whitman are the subject of this Canadian film.

According to the screenplay by John Kent Harrison, who directed, Bucke went to a medical conference in Philadelphia in 1880 and met Whitman, who happened to be in the audience. Bucke, overwhelmed and awe-struck, brought the poet back for a visit to London, Ontario, where he was the head of (as it was called) an insane asylum. Whitman then had a high old time supporting Bucke in his unconventional treatment of patients.

I thoroughly dislike films and plays of the *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* stripe, in which mentally ill people are portrayed as competent, just misunderstood: as possibly saner than the hospital staff around them. All this diluted R.D. Laing is essentially cheap and delusory, and it's not much better here. This is not an argument for the methods of Bedlam, it's just revulsion with the facileness of equating mental affliction with physical affliction. (If we encourage wheelchair patients to play basketball, why not mental patients? And so on.)

Well, at least Bucke is shown as compassionate and as responsive to Whitman's broad humanity. The dialogue is carpentered, not always skillfully; the directing is banal, but Rip Torn, appropriately hirsute, luxuriates as Whitman. Given the facts, Torn can hardly exaggerate Whitman's guru status. François Protat lays in some pleasant colors with his cinematography. Colm Feore is a bit starchy as Bucke, but Wendel Meldrum, as his wife, does some neat petite acting and has considerable personal appeal.

Pepi, Luci, Bom (Cinevista). If there were an award for bad taste—a chinaware Oscar, perhaps—this film should get it. How often can we see a picture in which the bad taste is deliberate on the part of a very clever filmmaker and is done for the most part with wit?

It's Pedro Almodóvar's first feature, made in 1980 and released here after his later films have had some success. It

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Casablanca. *Have another look on its fiftieth birthday, not least for Bogart's performance and Bergman's beauty. (Reviewed 5/4/92)* **Howards End.** *All arguments that the adaptation of Forster's novel might have been different are washed away by the quality of the acting that the film provides. Well worth more than one viewing. (3/23/92)* **The Last Butterfly.** *By Karel Kachyňa, veteran Czech director, celebrated in Europe, almost unknown here. About a French mime (Tom Courtenay) forced to perform in Theresienstadt. Excellently made, if a touch soggy. Look for it in the Human Rights Watch Film Festival. (6/8/92)* **November Days.** *In the same festival. Marcel Ophuls's probing documentary about the fall of the Berlin Wall. (6/1/92)* **—SK**

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shows all the signs of cheap production: cinematography that's almost amateurish, erratic editing, a sound track that isn't quite perfection. But it was made by a born writer-director who is using film as his way of revenge, fulfillment, strut, and all the other motives that drive artists.

The place is Madrid (I guess). The multiple, braided stories concern: a hooker who is also a virgin, how her virginity is breached, and how she gets even; a wife who has a masochistic experience in lesbianism and happily returns to her husband because now he is going to punish and abuse her; a bearded woman who tries to regain her gay husband's attention by shaving more closely; a penis-measuring contest among gays; excretory sex; and many other touches that are less unconventional than anti-conventions.

Remember those dear old Buñuel days when elegantly dressed people sat on toilets around a formal banquet table and this was considered bizarre? How picturesque, how quaint those days seem now. The original title of Almodóvar's film was *Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Girls Like Mom.*

My only real quarrel with Almodóvar is that his very latest films show some waning in outrageousness. Is it ambition toward commerce or a calming of the blood? I hope it's the former, so that admirers can persuade him to return to the outer limits of permissiveness after Franco.

The only notable performance in the film comes from the excellent Carmen Maura as the hooker. It's interesting that Maura, who was by 1980 a successful film and TV actress and cabaret artist, should have plunged into such an outré film with no worry as to its effect on her career. In 1980 Almodóvar was what we would once have called an underground director; that he should have become mainstream, Spain's proudest current boast, is remarkable enough. But that a successful actress should have joined him when he was out there on the shock-front . . . well, it couldn't have happened here without dire results. •

Post-Soviet bliss IV: The dictates and delusions of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

The Grand Inquisitor

BY TATYANA TOLSTAYA

I.

As is well known, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn supposes that there is a single truth, that the truth is one. The combined evidence of his work, especially his polemical articles, suggests also that he believes it is known to him alone. This sense of high exclusiveness became clear in 1974, immediately after his expulsion from the Soviet Union, when Russian émigrés, who would have gladly embraced this émigré by compulsion, ran into a hastily erected fence. It turned out that, in the mind of the involuntary émigré, they were all bad, since they had left Russia of their own will. (The horrible circumstances that forced them to flee, to save their lives and the lives of their families, were not taken into account.) But he, Solzhenitsyn, was good, since he had been expelled against his will.

Russian writers should not leave the motherland, they should stay home. Why? Because. Russian writers should not think about money. Russian writers should not criticize Russia (though they are obligated to curse the Soviet regime). Russian writers should not have their own opinions about other Russian writers (how dare Siniavsky love Pushkin so uncanonically, not the way the Leader and Teacher commands that he should?). It turned out, in short, that everyone should or should not do one thing or another, and that only Solzhenitsyn knew what precisely that thing was. Submit—or be condemned and excommunicated.

Russians learned a good lesson. For the umpteenth time they had raised up an idol, and for the umpteenth time, having barely settled on his pedestal, the idol began to kick, to bite, and to spit in their faces, and to demand the most terrible sacrifice: that they relinquish their free will, their liberty to reason and to feel, that they forsake, in other words, everything that constitutes individuality. The confusion and the dismay that this exposure of Solzhenitsyn caused among Russian émigrés actually benefited Russian thought and letters. The spat-upon matured from the experience; they left the Buddha behind to meditate on the far side of his fence, and they busied themselves with more productive matters than burning incense and offering flowers and honey to the little god.

Now, about the fence. As we know, on the mainland (as émigrés often refer to Russia) Solzhenitsyn's works were categorically forbidden. The émigrés that he shunned in their common exile were also forbidden. Thus, information about what was really going on between them in distant, inaccessible, legendary America didn't get through to Russia, or it arrived in distorted form. It was for this reason, and not only because of his extraordinary personal courage, that Solzhenitsyn gradually acquired the attributes of a quasi-mythological figure. Indeed, he was transformed into an archetype from Russian folklore, into one of those immortal, omnipotent, and often ornery old people who lives in a distant, inaccessible place, on an island or a glass mountain or an impenetrable forest, once-upon-a-time-in-a-far-off-kingdom. The famous writer came to be imagined rather like the ancient characters Koshei the Immortal or Grandfather Knowall or Baba Yaga, a powerful old crone who lives in the forest behind a pike fence decorated with human skulls.

The "immortality" of this man who had suffered from cancer, was miraculously cured, and was then transported by a supernatural power (by the KGB, and through the air) to the final point beyond the ocean, beyond the river of forgetfulness into a fairy-tale world, facilitated the formation of the myth. In Russia it was claimed that the fence around the Solzhenitsyn estate in the woods of Vermont was high and impenetrable, topped with barbed wire snares, like a

Rebuilding Russia: Reflections and Tentative Proposals
by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn
translated and annotated by Alexis Klimoff
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labor camp. It was whispered that the gates were guarded by vicious German shepherds that didn't understand Russian or English, but only Old Slavonic (the sacred language of the Church); in mythological terms, that is, the dogs responded only to certain magical formulas.

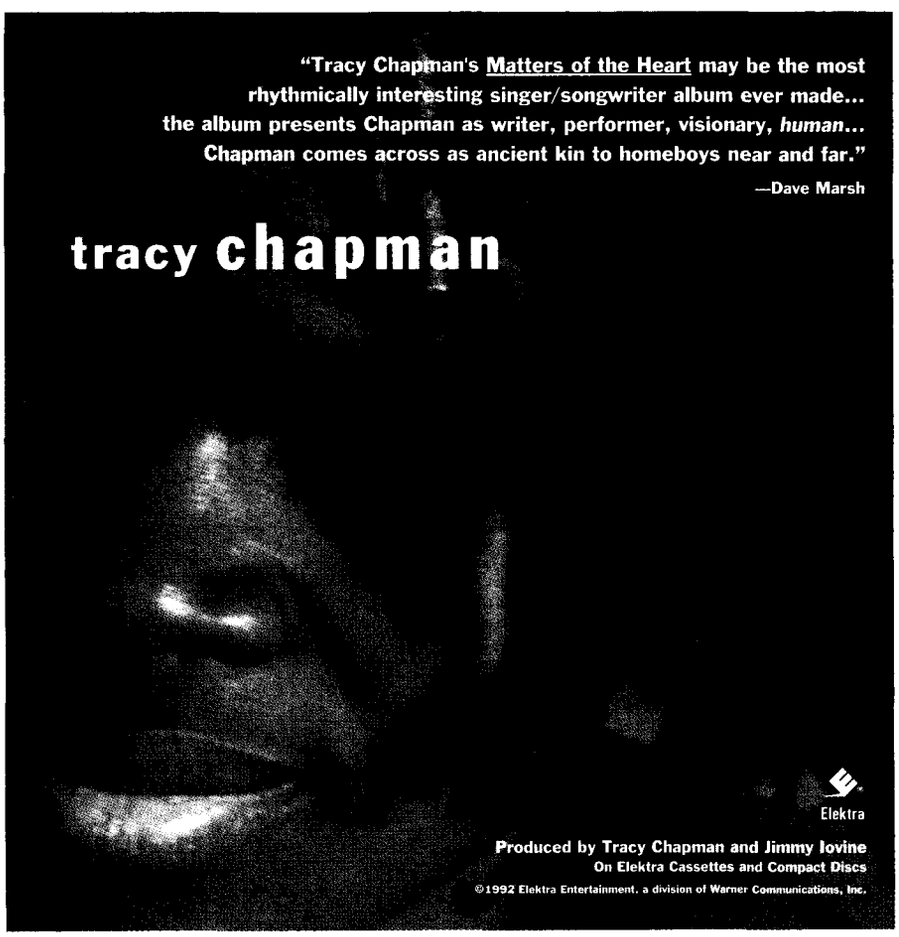
The legend about the fence has persisted, with different variations, for fifteen years. I remember when it was born, and I have seen it take root and grow thick with outlandish details. Just recently Solzhenitsyn was visited by the director Stanislav Govorukhin, one of the few who have been allowed into the inner sanctum. And what was the very first thing that the visitor reported back to his listeners, who hunger for bedtime tales? That the fence was not what we had thought, that it was only an ordinary wire fence guarding the grounds from deer, that it was neither very tall nor very strong. (Now who asked him to go and destroy a myth?)

The immortal and irascible old wise men of Russian folklore rarely have direct dealings with anyone. The role of press spokesman or messenger is usually played by a quasi-magical woman, who is close to the old man but is kind and favorably disposed toward the people. It might be Vasilisa the Beautiful, captured by Koshei to be his wife and housekeeper, and to scratch his head at night; or the lass Chernavka, who serves Baba Yaga and scratches her heels before bedtime; or one of those nameless girls who warn mortal guests about the host's bad mood. Solzhenitsyn's wife plays this role: she delivers his manuscripts to the outside world and conveys his refusal (or, rarely, his agreement) to be interviewed. It is she who sometimes responds to Russian writers who have dared to request an audience, "Aleksandr Isaevich approves of your story, but you needn't come. He won't see visitors." Which brings to mind the skulls on Baba Yaga's fence. They were all that remained of the unfortunate travelers who tried to break into the enchanted enclave without the requisite passwords and skills, and without making use of the messenger's friendly assistance. They got what they deserved.

The consummation of the Solzhenitsyn myth is the half-joking conviction of Russian émigrés that the Solzhenitsyn in Vermont is not the "real" one, that there has been a switch, that the KGB sent a double and the "real" Solzhenitsyn rotted somewhere in the Gulag. In the eighteenth century, Russians spoke much the same way about Peter the Great, who traveled to the West and returned infected with Western ideas: that Russians should wear German clothes, shave their beards, and smoke tobacco, that Russian women should wear décolleté dresses and dance with men. It was whispered that Peter had been switched, and that the figure who returned to Russia was the Antichrist. In the Russian popular imagination, the West, where the sun goes down, is a bewitched location, denoting night, cold, death, the corridor to another world (which is why all those magical elders live in the West). The unseen line that divides "East" from "West" is a magic site where people are transformed. A transfiguration takes place, a turning inside out, a metamorphosis; werewolvery, werefolkery.

The mythopoetic model of the "wise old man behind the fence," of the "magical grandfather," has existed since pre-literate and dark times. Anyone who conforms to this archetype, deliberately or not, is doomed to immortality. Thus the tyrant Ivan the Terrible, whose reign spread fear across the land, is remembered with a respect that has not diminished over the last 400 years, while softhearted Boris Godunov, who tried to reform and to enlighten, is regarded with contempt and pity. Ivan the Terrible killed countless people, but he is honored; Boris Godunov may or may not have killed one sickly boy, the Tsarevich Dmitri, but the populace will not forgive him. Similarly, Stalin is much more popular than Lenin among our conservatives, who boast of their closeness to the people, their nationalism, their roots. (They are right, the proximity is obvious.) Stalin's fence was higher, his guard was more fearsome, and he himself was far more enigmatic than the "open" Lenin. He also killed many more people, so clearly his sorcery was more powerful than Lenin's. Of course, both Lenin and Stalin dwelt behind the Kremlin's fence, possessed superhuman (more correctly, inhuman) wisdom, and the ability to foresee the future (a perennial characteristic of our folklore about leaders); and both are immortal. (Neither of them was buried when they died, and Lenin remains unburied today.) One official slogan declared, "Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will live," and another one, "Stalin is Lenin Today."

Every culture and every nation has its own powerful sources of mythological radiation. As long as these sources are alive, the nation recognizes itself. Certainly mythological models are very strong among Russians. As long as myths are alive, "Russia" is alive. "What is Russia?" Solzhenitsyn has asked, as have millions of others. The land? The language? The traditions? Well, it could be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claimed that Russia exists when and where Russian mythological models are reproduced. If they operate in Moscow or Siberia, in New York or Vermont, then Russia is there, too. In this sense, Solzhenitsyn is a profoundly Russian character—and a profoundly pagan Russian character, though he considers himself a Russian Orthodox Christian.

In this sense, the struggle of "Russia" with the "West" is a battle with foreign sources of mythic radiation. And the underestimation of this "Russian voodoo" leads to mistakes and misunderstandings. Take the case of Western aid, for example. The Russian attitude toward it has been described in the press more or less accurately. The Russians want this help (everyone wants to eat!), but they are ashamed of it (such a big, rich country, and we are forced to take leftovers from the Germans, whom we defeated in the war); they are grateful for it (how can you not thank the giver for his kindness?), but they are suspicious of it (they'll feed us, lull us into letting down our guard, and then demand half our country!).

But another element is left out of the picture. No one talks about it, you are not supposed to mention it. It is that Russians secretly feel that the West is *obligated* to feed them, that this is only just and fair, the result of some special sorcery at work, or of the magic word or smile or threat or spell that sets the aid of enchanted powers in motion. In this way, for example, did lazy Emel, the hero of a Russian fairy tale, catch a pike in the river. The fish begged to be released, and Emel agreed, on the condition that the fish promise to help him on a regular basis. The pike would do all of Emel's work for him, provide him with food and drink, rescue him from any peril. And at the end of the tale Emel naturally married the Tsarevna and received half a kingdom as her dowry.

The fairy tale doesn't allow for any doubt that the pike will keep its word. Magical creatures may not deceive. Humans, however, may deceive; and so, in relation to foreigners, Russians feel that we will always trick them, but they will not trick us. The foreigners—well, they're not really quite human, they only appear to be like us, but they really don't have souls, they're empty inside, they're mechanical (Dostoyevsky wrote that), they are werefolk, they came from the West, the land of dangerous wonders and sumptuous treasures. They know how to cast the magic spell, how to make money, gold, riches, and so let them serve us. (After the revolution in 1917, bankers were jailed and interrogated about how they made money: What do you need to do it, what is the secret? The frightened, astonished bankers muttered something about labor and the laws of economics, but the peasant-born secret policemen only laughed: Come now, you can't fool us! Tell us your secrets!)

ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

II.

The little book by Solzhenitsyn that has recently appeared in English was published in Russian in two Soviet newspapers in September 1990. It appeared in the United States, in other words, after the revolution of August 1991, when the Soviet Union almost ceased to exist, when all the cracks and schisms, previously hidden under a deceptively smooth surface, suddenly emerged, tearing apart a huge power in all imaginable and unimaginable directions. The previous reality no longer exists, the old facts are obsolete, the logic of history, once unknown to all of us, now manifests itself before our very eyes, frightening peaceful citizens and awakening emotions that people never even suspected that they possessed.

In this sense Solzhenitsyn's book is completely outdated, though not by any fault of his own. Still, in another sense, in another dimension, in the mythological space in which the writer and his faithful audience dwell, this text is not in the least dated. Indeed, in its essence it can never become dated. For it is the stuff of myth, and in this myth, in this ideal world, a Great and Kind-Hearted Russia, populated by a Wise and Just People, endures. Evil Forces (communism, Soviet power) cast a temporary spell on the People and turn them from the path to the One and Only Truth, but these powers will be defeated by the Wisdom of the People.

Since this space is mythic, moreover, its size is not all that important. Thus, according to Solzhenitsyn in his book, a smaller Russia is better: in a smaller Russia, there will be fewer aliens. Time also is a secondary consideration, and therefore the writer speaks of prerevolutionary Russia as if it continues to exist, petrified and immobile, in some dreamtime. And, having established these fairy-tale parameters, it is only natural to furnish them with a fairy-tale Russian people; and this, in turn, requires the mythmaker personally to determine the criteria for belonging, the criteria of true Russianness, and hence to approve, to thunder, to command.

What is to be done with the former Soviet Union, which occupies one-sixth of our planet's land mass? Two hundred and eighty million people. More than 130 nationalities. Myriad religions, faiths, superstitions, sects. A babel of lan-

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guages. The broadest spectrum of political views and passions. And everyone is wretched, everyone sees an enemy in his neighbor, everyone is running from someone or chasing others. The Soviet Union has collapsed, and yet it has not collapsed. The process continues. How much iniquity, blood, and injustice will we have to witness? The terrifying example of Yugoslavia stands before us. What is to be done?

I don't know. I am in no position to give any advice. I can only observe and ask more questions. Solzhenitsyn, by contrast, has the answers. "Should," "should," "should," "should," he hammers from the pages of his essay. Solzhenitsyn proposes his own formula for the collapse of the country, based not on real (and perhaps unsolvable) problems, but on a mythological paradigm in which Russia, surrounded by aliens, occupies the center. Solzhenitsyn is not stupid or ignorant; he cannot fail to understand that the conflicts of kindred peoples (Russians and Ukrainians, for example) are often more acrimonious than those of very different peoples. But reality doesn't have much place in his picture of the world. For him, Ukrainians are brothers, while Armenians, say, are not. His rigid and immutable design can only frighten and offend those who have other sympathies and other ties.

The English title of Solzhenitsyn's essay is *Rebuilding Russia*. That is imprecise. A more literal translation of the original would read: "How We [Should] Arrange Russia." The translator, Alexis Klimoff, has dropped that important "We," thereby dampening the author's clearly expressed desire to emphasize his membership in an exclusively Russian fellowship, and his intention to participate in the plans for rebuilding. In the original Russian, that "should" is implied rather than stated, but it is heard by every Russian ear. And "rebuilding" is also, really, an incorrect translation. Though the word "rebuilding" in fact conveys the idea of Solzhenitsyn's essay, Solzhenitsyn's own word craftily evades and flirts with the dictionary. For the word *obustroit* describes, more precisely, the process of turning a dwelling into a comfortable place: I'll put the wardrobe here, the bed there, the table over in the corner. I do not mean to be overly harsh toward the translator, for the task is titanic. One must translate Solzhenitsyn first into Russian, and then from Russian into English.

The Italian writer Tommaso Landolfi has a story about a man who learns Persian. Inspired by the divine harmonies of the language, he writes a marvelous poem. He is convinced that it is a work of genius, and seeks out the reaction of specialists. But it turns out that no one (other than his joker-teacher, who disappears) knows this "Persian" language. Such a Persian simply does not exist. The nasty prank torments the poet, since he cannot share the treasure that he possesses. He tries to translate his masterpiece into accessible Italian: no good, it's not right, it's merely a pale copy with little meaning and less poetry. The great beauty that has been revealed to him must remain unknown to others.

Solzhenitsyn is in a similar situation. Unlike the unfortunate poet, however, he himself invented this "Persian" language, which swaddles his speech and his mind in a thick shroud. In this particular text I counted more than 100 words that are not used in the Russian language, and my tally, I am certain, is not complete. It's not that these words are entirely incomprehensible: recognizable Russian linguistic roots show through each of them, the prefixes and the suffixes are more or less Russian, the nouns stand where nouns should, the verbs indicate action. A number of words, however, are transformed beyond recognition, so that as you read you have to stop and think, is this a verb? Imagine that your cat suddenly grew a cow's head. You might not object, but you would certainly pause to wonder if it will drink milk or produce it.

Solzhenitsyn may have invented some of these words. Others he clearly found in his favorite book, Vladimir Dahl's *Reasoned Dictionary of the Living Great-Russian Language* (1863-66). That lexicon is a marvelous collection of words that were and still are used in Russian, but as befits a dictionary, it is a storehouse, a treasury. It unites words in that imaginary, intellectual, theoretical space called language. No real individual speaks this language. Real individuals know only a part of it—otherwise we wouldn't need such collections of words.

Solzhenitsyn got his hands on Dahl relatively late—in 1946, when the future writer was about 30. It's obvious that he was bowled over by this Aladdin's cave of language, and he grabbed more gems than he was able to carry. I remember an interview Solzhenitsyn gave quite some time ago, in which he talked about how, with the help of his children, he was revising Dahl's dictionary with a view to determining which words Russians needed and which they did not. There is also a work that he recently compiled and published on the basis of that effort, the *Russian Dictionary of Linguistic Expansion*, a recommended list of words that are now little used or obsolete.

Again, these are wonderful words for a dictionary, but they are unthinkable as recommendations for the actual speech of real people; a joy for the historian, but incomprehensible to the contemporary ear; appropriate in rare contexts (a quotation of direct speech, a quarrel, a historical novel), but absolutely impossible in today's language, written or spoken. If medical instructions were to be written in the language of Beowulf, or judicial opinions in the language of Joyce, or road signs in cuneiform writing, if CNN's anchors appeared on the air in bathing suits and the president read a speech wrapped in a yashmak, then you might scream with frustration, even though you probably don't have anything against either Beowulf or bathing suits.

In Solzhenitsyn's little book, at least two lexical layers are clearly delineated. First, there is his "Persian," which includes verbs, adverbs, and nouns meaning "crazy," "doom," "to rob," "neglect," "blindness," "to spoil," "unfortunate," "bad," "very bad," and "horrible," and also "befriend" and "together." The meaning of a good half of these words can be reconstructed only by spotting their roots. This "Persian" vocabulary is rich, inexhaustible, and very expressive and, given the context, incredibly tasteless. And it is incorporated into a syntax that is equally unintelligible—not Russian literary syntax, but that of "popular" or "peasant" speech. This, of course, is no accident. Even if you ignore the meaning of what is said, and consider the style alone, it becomes quite clear that the writer is speaking to the "people," the "muzhik," the "peasant"—an imagined and generic peasant, to be sure. Addressing these archetypes in this archaic and obsolete language, Solzhenitsyn rails and curses. Others—notably foreigners, city-dwellers, and contemporaries—are not his intended interlocutors. Through his mythological fence Solzhenitsyn conjures a mythological Russia-dweller, and summons the spirit of the Russian land with spells and incantations. All are supposed to respond, mere mortals as well as the entire pantheon of our folklore: the talking steeds, wise ravens, all-powerful pikes, mice, hobgoblins, mermaids, and domestic spirits.

The second layer of Solzhenitsyn's language consists largely of political terminology: "parliament," "party," "democracy," "bureaucracy," "economy," "majority" and "minority," "monopoly,"

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"voting," "procedure," "lawyer," "legislation," "proportional system," "information," "statistics," "national," and many other such words. The syntax in the section where these words dominate is normative, clear, easily mastered. This, too, is no coincidence. When you switch from magic to reality, you have to speak comprehensibly. There are no mermaids in parliament.

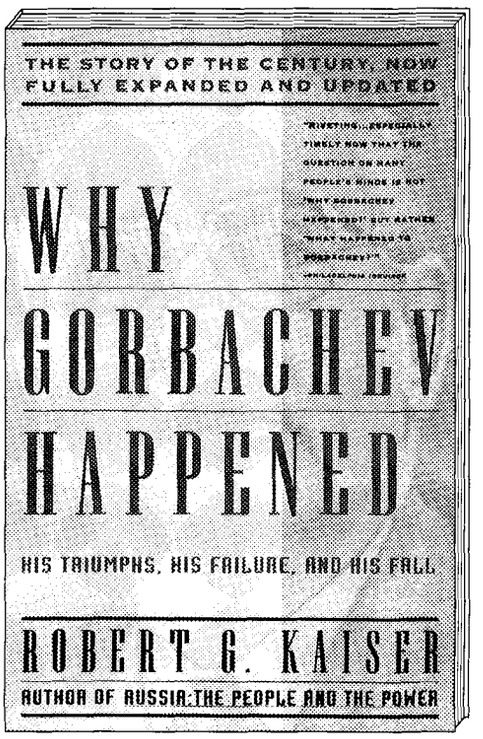
Solzhenitsyn's article is divided into two almost equal parts, which consist, in turn, of fourteen short "chapters" each. In the first half of his book, the author speaks of the past and the present, and in the second half he gives his ideas regarding the future. I counted the frequency of "strange" words and locutions in both parts. In the first part there are 127 such expressions; in the second, 21. They are distributed among the fourteen chapters of each part in the following manner: in part one—12, 16, 11, 11, 6, 8, 12, 6, 7, 3, 8, 12, 11, 4. In part two—1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 0, 5, 1, 5, 0, 0, 1, 1. This is surprising only at first glance. After all, it is in the first half of his text that Solzhenitsyn denounces, appeals, curses, and prophecies—and the apocalyptic mode, as is well known, requires inarticulateness, fervor, and hysteria. If a prophet runs about barefoot, his beard flailing in the wind and his trembling hands lifted heavenward, you listen to him. If the prophet is calm, polite, clean-shaven, and properly dressed, you won't give him the time of day.

It is impossible to expound a proposal for governmental organization in the tone of someone who has just been stung by a scorpion. Not that Solzhenitsyn is mad. Quite the contrary, he knows perfectly well where he is and what he is doing. Here's what he does. He identifies and juxtaposes two principles: "the people" and "the individual." According to Solzhenitsyn, the interests of the people are good, but the interests of the individual are bad. The people want to live a quiet, worthy, well-fed life; the individual wants to grab, to seize, to appropriate, to enjoy. Who are these greedy, disgusting creatures? Young people, the people of television and radio, speculators from the "shadow economy," bureaucrats, all political parties (by definition), the city of Moscow, the nomenklatura, 75 percent of "glasnost's troubadours," teachers, athletes, the military, the Communists, the KGB, the intelligentsia. The government is on the take, industry is "mindless and rapacious," the peasant estate has died out.

Taken individually, in short, everyone is no good. Perhaps this is true, but then how did all these scoundrels manage to constitute a good people? The answer is that "the people" is not "constituted of." According to Solzhenitsyn, "the people" is a living organism, not a "mere mechanical conglomeration of disparate individuals." This, of course, is the old, inevitable trick of totalitarian thinking: "the people" is posited as unified and whole in its multiplicity. It is a sphere, a swarm, an anthill, a beehive, a body. And a body should strive for perfection; everything in it should be smooth, sleek, and harmonious. Every organ should have its place and its function: the heart and brain are more important than the nails and the hair, and so on. If your eye tempts you, then tear it out and throw it away; cut off sickly members, curb those limbs that will not obey, and fortify your spirit with abstinence and prayer.

Having described quite colorfully the horrors and the consequences of communism, and sketched a broad (and in many respects accurate) picture of the country's desolation, Solzhenitsyn commands twelve (or eleven-and-a-half) republics to separate "unequivocally and irreversibly" from Russia proper, in the name of the people. He would leave only the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Russian part of Kazakhstan in a "Russian Union." He similarly allows the more than 100 small nationalities and ethnic groups to

The Man Who Could Transform the World But Not Himself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remain part of Russia. "Should they wish to be with us, more the credit to them." And what should be done if one of the twelve "big" republics doesn't want to separate? "With the same resolve we—that is, those remaining—will then need to proclaim our separation from them." "We"—the three Slavic peoples—merge into a single whole and keep 100 smaller ethnic groups for ourselves, while banishing the twelve larger peoples utterly without regard to their desires. (There are chapters called "A word to the Great Russians," "A word to the Ukrainians and Belorussians," and "A word to the smaller nationalities and ethnic groups," but the rest are not found worthy of the patriarch's "words.")

Solzhenitsyn knows perfectly well the horrors of such forced separation—what it means to cut across the lives of nations, cultures, families, and lands that are closely intertwined—but with biblical cruelty he divides people into "ours" and "not ours." To the Ukrainians, he cries: "Brothers! We have no need of this cruel partition. The very idea comes from the darkening of minds brought on by the Communist years. Together we have born the suffering of the Soviet period, together we have tumbled into this pit, and together, too, we shall find our way out." But he is short with "aliens": "panels of experts representing all concerned parties must begin deliberations" to figure out a separation plan. "This sorting process might well take several years."

On the one hand, brothers. On the other hand, commissions of experts. Who are these experts? About what are they expert? Where did they gain the experience that confers upon them such authority? Will this be something like the medieval councils of doctors, professors of phlegm and black bile, in velvet berets with quill pens, and saws near at hand for the necessary and justified amputations? Or will the commissions consist only of "brothers"? But can "brothers" really be relied upon, if, as Solzhenitsyn himself quite rightly says, we "have been hurled back to a state of semibarbarity," and "there is no guarantee whatever that the new leaders now coming to the fore will immediately prove to be farsighted and soberminded," and "of all the possible freedoms, the one that will inevitably come to the fore will be the freedom to be unscrupulous," and our souls have been "destroyed," and glasnost is defended by "tainted voices," and three of every four defenders of glasnost are unrepentant "toadies of Brezhnevism," and tens of thousands of intellectuals ("smatterers") have "festering moral sores," and our merchants are "sharks bred in the murky waters of the Soviet underground," and "our glasnost is bedecked, festooned with the same old plump and heavy clusters of lies," and so on?

Consider the chapter "Family and School," which is structured like the rest of them. First, the lamentations: woe is me, woe is us, alack and alas, all is lost! Then the advice on how to correct the situation: begin with children. But since the children have to be taught, begin with the teachers. But since the teachers also have to be taught, begin with the teachers of the teachers. Throw out all the textbooks. Rework everything. Change the university curriculum. But who, again, should do all this? The festering intelligentsia? The mendacious authorities? The wealthy sharks? And if, sharing Solzhenitsyn's horror of this vicious cycle of woe, I should attempt to do something by myself, without waiting for the proper help, well, what awaits me is the lash of control:

> In the near future we can probably also expect to see the appearance of tuition-charging private schools which will surpass the standards of the school system in particular subjects or in some other specific educational aspects. But such schools must not institute irresponsibly arbitrary curricula; they should be under the supervision and control of local educational authorities.

We have come full circle. We have arrived not at freedom, but at control. The unfortunate children, with whom the writer started, are abandoned and forgotten. They were only there for decoration, for rhetorical purposes, to attract attention.

Voting and elections, according to Solzhenitsyn's plan, are not necessary, since "the majority" cannot know what is better for the government and what is worse. In the Russian Union our lives are to be managed by a Sobornaya Duma, or Collective Council, which consists of representatives of the estates. (The writer clarifies that the estates are not the same thing as the trade unions: the unions fight for material welfare, "higher wages and other benefits," while the estates are based on a "common creative impulse," or, as the Russian has it literally, "spiritual co-creativity.") Moreover, these representatives—"the most worthy"—are to be appointed (without voting) by the method of "polling the wise men" (the model here is "the mountain people of the Caucasus") or some other equally enigmatic procedure. (But who will conduct the poll, one wonders? Who will determine the degree of wisdom? Of what does this wisdom consist? How will the disagreement of protesters, stupid people, and those armed to the teeth be resolved? Can the wise man be bought with money? Does he know human passions, weaknesses, fears?) Then, having received the highest authority, the Sobornaya Duma "will have the power to interdict any law or any action by a government institution or agency, and to mandate changes or corrections," for "moral principles must take priority over legal ones" and "any secret organization ... will be subject to criminal prosecution for conspiracy against society."

If, at this point, the reader cannot dispel the feeling of déjà vu, he is right. The social organization that Solzhenitsyn proposes has already been attempted by somebody called Lenin. The similarities between Lenin and Solzhenitsyn are striking, and they make the differences seem inconsequential. Lenin had "soviets," Solzhenitsyn has "zemstvos," and both are forms of local "self-determination." According to Lenin, socialism is a matter of inventory and control; according to Solzhenitsyn, the future of Russia is a matter of inventory and control. For Lenin, there is the wisdom of the party. For Solzhenitsyn, there is the wisdom of the elders. For Lenin, the intelligentsia is "shit." For Solzhenitsyn, it is filth, pus, hypocrisy. (His polemical essay "Our Pluralists" is entirely directed against the intelligentsia, which he accuses of a diversity of opinion.)

Solzhenitsyn believes that "party rivalry distorts the national will." Lenin thought much the same and destroyed all parties save his own. Both, naturally, cite the will of the people, but neither will allow this people to vote and elect. Lenin detested Russian Orthodoxy and made atheism the government religion. Solzhenitsyn does the opposite, with the same fervor: atheism should be forbidden. Both hate the rule of law. Lenin called the rule of law "bourgeois," which for him was a synonym for "Western, democratic," and enough has been said of Solzhenitsyn's attitude toward the West. The fact that both of them say that "some things may be taken" from the West does not really change the situation. Both, in fact, took personal advantage of the most important things that the West has to offer: its freedoms of speech, the press, action, and movement. Both, living in the security of the West, worked out projects to deprive Russia's inhabitants of freedom, projects that prefer "opinions" to laws, that promote the "moral feeling" of the minority as the ruling power, that call for "democracy" without elections. The apogee of arbitrariness is Solzhenitsyn's statement

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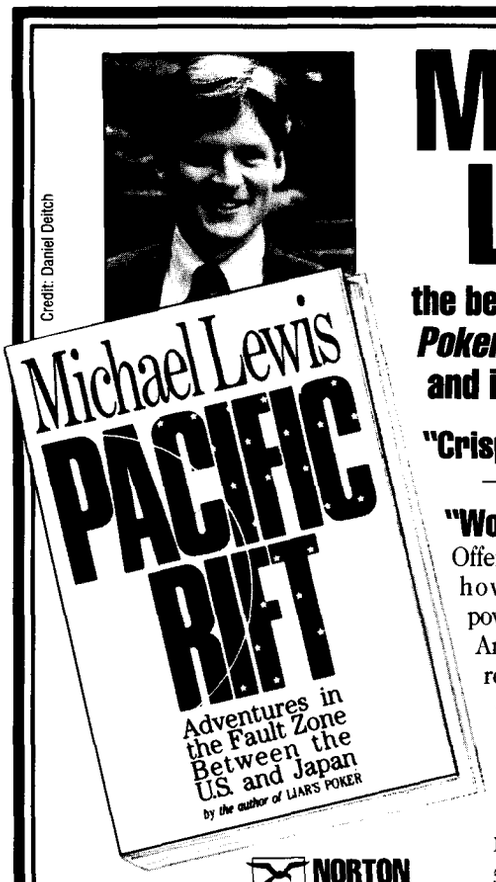
that "power is a call to service and it cannot be the subject of interparty competition."

Russian readers, who are better acquainted with Lenin's works than they care to be (Lenin was required reading in school and university), immediately notice that even the title of Solzhenitsyn's work, "How We Should Arrange Russia," recalls the title of Lenin's "How We Should Reorganize Rabkrin" (the *rabkrin* were committees of inspection run by workers and peasants). Russia, in fact, has already been "arranged" once according to Solzhenitsyn's plan. And the wise men whose opinion was higher than the law found a cozy place for the writer: on a freezing bunk in the Gulag.

Human beings are awful, there's no denying it. My neighbor is especially awful. He behaves badly, looks strange, likes things that repulse me, and wants things I've already got my eye on; and worst of all, he dares to think the very same of me. History knows two opposite ways of handling such vile creatures. The first is to forbid everything. Fire (Sodom and Gomorrah), water (the Flood), wholesale deaths, inquisition, wars, witch hunts, the Gulag—it's all been tried, but without much apparent effect. Tell a human being "No!" and you can bet that the moment you turn your back he'll be up to his old tricks.

The second way is to allow everything, to let people themselves work out laws, and to let those laws regulate the incessant flares and sparks of human caprice and need. Laws (like money, which reformers of humanity also hate) were not invented by wily scoundrels, as Solzhenitsyn and Lenin think. Laws are the result of the natural, collective efforts of humanity to establish a single measure on the path to some sort of justice in an imperfect world. For all their flawed approximateness, they have somehow saved humanity from arbitrariness, tyranny, and madness. It is perfectly true that everyone's moral sense differs, that everyone is piqued by different things, but that is precisely why any attempt to substitute "moral feelings" for law inevitably leads to the kind of situation in which, instead of getting a ticket for illegal parking, you and your entire city would be engulfed in fire and brimstone.

Invectives against human insatiability and calls for voluntary self-limitation, when they are not accompanied by specific indications of "how many seeds you must have before you can call them a bunch," may provoke alarm in the sensitive Russian. Can Solzhenitsyn himself have overstepped the mark? Might he, too, have become a shark? Worried, the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simple soul scans the pages of Solzhenitsyn's books, of articles on him, of Michael Scammell's biography of him, in search of models to emulate. And one finds: fifty acres of land ... two houses on the lot ... twelve volumes of collected works ... a second wife ... three children ... a son at Harvard, when he could have studied at a little Vermont college ... a son playing piano and giving concert tours when he could have stayed home and beat humbly on a toy drum. Money? The author's income is not publicized, but as early as 1974 there is mention of $2 million to $3 million dollars ... What a relief! The threshold of self-limitation established by the prophet of Vermont is clearly unattainable in actual Russian life. Russians may sleep soundly.

If someone in Russia were to take Solzhenitsyn's recommendations seriously and set about fulfilling them point by point, the country would collapse within a month. If Solzhenitsyn took over the real Russia with its real population, uprisings, pogroms, and conflagrations would commence within a week. The Russian people, of course, are no gift. Obedient but not acquiescent, submissive but willful, lazy but pliant—everyone wants to have a go at governing them, at deciding for them. Referring to the "Will of the People" (with capital letters, of course), Solzhenitsyn's pen frequently slips, and accidentally declares that no one knows what this will is or how it may be determined. On those occasions when he does detect traces of that will's free manifestation, however, he can find no kind words for it. Here's what the people have chosen to embrace from the West: the "continuous seepage of liquid manure—the self-indulgent and squalid 'popular mass culture,' the utterly vulgar fashions and the byproducts of immoderate publicity." But "popular," "mass," "vulgar," and "public" are all words that describe the people, and these, after all, are *its* music, *its* fashion, *its* byproducts, however revolting they might be or seem. The people in theory always diverge dramatically from the people in reality; and the horror of this truth is sooner or later discovered by everyone who pretends to the people's spiritual leadership, by everyone who knows how things should and should not be done.

Having settled in the most atypical state in the United States, built himself a fence, refused to allow mere mortals to enter (except for the few who agree to scratch his heels), Solzhenitsyn unconsciously and instinctively submerged himself in myth. But, as often happens with Russians, he overdid it. His drama, as I see it, lies precisely in his Russianness: in the fact that he so completely and without any doubt identifies himself with Russia, being flesh of its flesh and blood of its blood. And this proves that, although there is absolutely nothing Western about him, not the tiniest wrinkle, he is nonetheless only a part of Russia, and not Russia itself. For Russia is broader and more diverse, stranger and more contradictory, than any idea of it. It resists all theories about what makes it tick, confounds all the paths to its possible transformation. One can describe and explain Russia in a thousand ways, but as soon as the theorist and the dreamer lays down his pen, satisfied at last with his description, diabolical laughter will sound from the emptiness behind him, and the undried ink will evaporate, leaving not a trace on the white page.

—translated from the Russian by Jamey Gambrell

Leaps of Faith

BY MINDY ALOFF

Prodigal Son: Dancing for Balanchine in a World of Pain and Magic by Edward Villella with Larry Kaplan

(Simon and Schuster, 317 pp., $23)

In sports it's DiMaggio, in politics it's Eisenhower, in ballet it's woman: George Balanchine is supposed to have made such a remark. The idea is witty, and up to a point it is true. Up to *the* point, actually. The development of the point shoe in the nineteenth century put women at the frontier of the art's imagery and engineering. Point technique encouraged ballerinas to lengthen their limbs, and to perch and float and otherwise transform themselves—from the legs up—in thin air. They became priestesses of poetic symbol and wizards of technical fact. The tapering line of the point, moreover, gave the foot a new, stylized edge. For observers of classical ballet dancing, whose essence is fidelity to geometric ideals, the point became a visual and emotional focus, and its unnatural beauty made the eye greedy to take in the dancing body as an imminent revelation of pure line, as an angel. (Those observers included the dancers, observing themselves in the mirror.)

When you're talking things like point shoes and line, again, you're talking women. They are more flexible than men, more limber and poised; in kinetic terms, more refined. Their legs and feet look wonderful in point shoes, whereas men look ludicrous in them. And the fascination among major nineteenth-century choreographers and composers with the era's Gothic and otherwise high-strung literary obsessions combined with the flowering of point technique to produce a balletic repertory of fantastical romances, with women at the center.

In those ballets, the climax of the evening is the pas de deux, and in the pas de deux the central events are the partnered adagio and the ballerina's solo. As visual poetry, the man's solo is often dispensable, power and pursuit without nuance. But the woman's solo gives a choreographer's imagination room to maneuver. A man's solo is typically the same story: a man becomes a Man. But a woman's solo has a built-in suspense: Will the woman become a ballerina, that creature who is not only a great dancer but also the source of radiance in the picture, or will she remain merely an expert, untransforming and untransformed?

Much of the choreography that Fokine made for Nijinsky in the early years of the twentieth century took these givens as points of departure for enlarging the dramatic scope of what, in Nijinsky's case, "Man" on stage might mean. Nijinsky is often said to have represented a new assertion of the importance of the male dancer in classical ballet, but the androgyne quality of much of what he danced owed something to ballerinalike moments of transformation—the girl's lambent dream of a rose that becomes a man with a virile jump, or the woman's golden slave who, in death, breaks out of submission by leaping from a staircase and doing

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pirouettes upside down on his head.

In some parts of Europe, notably in France, not only men's solos but men themselves were given the gate by the turn of the twentieth century. Women in trousers could partner women. Vigorous traditions of male dancing continued, however, in Denmark and in Russia. It is the male stars from these countries, in the main, who have set the standard of male dancing in our time: Erik Bruhn, Peter Martins, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Rudolph Nureyev. And at some point in their careers, all of them attempted to dance for Balanchine, the modern choreographer with the most obviously entrenched commitments to the centrality of the ballerina. This was not because of a dearth of choreographers willing to choreograph strong parts for men. Indeed, if you look at twentieth-century ballet without Balanchine, you find that it is preponderantly male-centered, with the balance tipping toward the ballerina in direct proportion to the technical expertise of the choreographer. The more you relish the nuances of how classical steps are executed, the more interested you are going to be in point work and partnering, and that interest is going to have a direct effect on your dramaturgy, your choice of music, your costuming—on everything. The plight of the male dancer has been not a lack of roles, but a lack of dramatic necessity and true technical challenge. The best sought out Balanchine because of his track record at providing both—to women regularly, with joy, and to men sometimes, as a chore.

The greatest American-born male dancer whom Balanchine ever served was Edward Villella. In fact, Villella was more than a great dancer; he was a great international star. The New York City Ballet's disclaimer that it is a starless company notwithstanding, Villella was one of Balanchine's indisputable stars of the 1960s. People came to see him in the third movement of *Symphony in C*, or in *Donizetti Variations*, or in *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux*. As inspirations go, he may have been Balanchine's most stimulating male virtuoso. Today you can hardly attend a performance of City Ballet without running into his influence on the Balanchine repertory: Villella was the original for Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for the male lead in the "Rubies" section of *Jewels*, for the warrior-lover in *Bugaku*, and for the male figures in *Tarentella*, in the central pas de deux of *Symphony in Three Movements*, and in the andante of *Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet*. His performances in the title role of *Prodigal Son*—a ballet that Balanchine himself detested but revived anyway for Villella in the 1959-60 season—remain definitive in the memories of those who saw them. (Even Baryshnikov's Prodigal, which Villella helped to coach, could not dim Villella's luster.)

Balanchine once expressed the opinion that he would be remembered as a teacher, and that is halfway how Villella remembers him in his memoir: as a bad teacher. A choreographer of incomparable genius, and a bad teacher. Indeed, at the heart of this memoir, one of a steady stream of recent articles and books in which Balanchine figures prominently, lie some of the most potentially damaging charges to have appeared against him in print.

"Balanchine's classes were famous, legendary—and paradoxical," Villella writes. He goes on:

> Dame Ninette de Valois, founder of England's Royal Ballet, once described them to me as choreographic rather than pedagogical. She was right in a way; they existed as a lab for his choreographic experiments. They were meant to replenish the body, but they didn't do that for me. Once I started to question them, my misgivings multiplied. They were simply chaotic, formless exercises, and I never knew what to expect. Everything Balanchine said was intellectually illuminating, but the class itself didn't unfold in a logical progression. Structure was predicated on Balanchine's mood or his whim, or by what he was interested in at a given time.

Villella's complaints about Balan-

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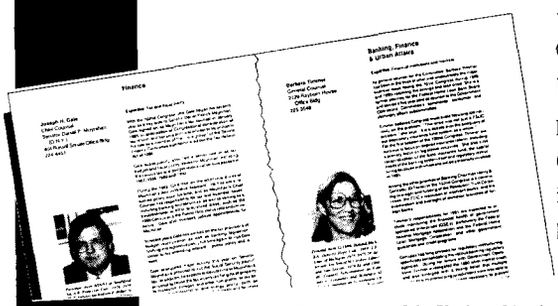

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chine's classes are not new. Gelsey Kirkland, in *Dancing on My Grave*, expressed a similar discontent. Some of the dancers interviewed by Francis Mason for *I Remember Balanchine*—a collection of essays and interviews that constitutes the most wide-ranging biography of Balanchine to date—also take issue with Balanchine's pedagogy. But Villella's grievance carries a special authority. For, while he continued to revere Balanchine as a choreographer, he finally found an alternative to Balanchine's classes and flourished.

Like Kirkland, Villella trained from childhood almost exclusively at the School of American Ballet, the teaching institution of the New York City Ballet. Unlike Kirkland, he exhibits no vindictiveness toward his SAB teachers. A working-class jock from Bayside, Queens, Villella loved being an SAB student on full scholarship. When, at the irrational insistence of his parents, he had to leave the school overnight, he grieved as if it were the end of the world. For the next four years, he attended Maritime College in the Bronx. When he finally got back to SAB, at the age of 21, he put his body under crushing stress, thinking that he had to make up in a few months for the years that he had lost.

When Villella joined the company in 1957, he plunged into a schedule of classes, rehearsals, and performances that was taxing for the most prepared and most careful of dancers—and Villella was far from either. During the rehearsals that year for the new Balanchine ballet *Square Dance*, Villella began to experience severe muscle cramps, a problem that would follow him throughout his career. What he didn't know about the practicalities of being in a professional ballet company hurt him. Every day between three in the afternoon and seven in the evening, for example, the dancers would have a break. "By the time we were ready to work again, my muscles had completely cooled down," Villella writes. "I didn't know that I could easily adjust to this cooling-down period by warming up again with a brief barre. Instead, when rehearsal started, I just plunged right in." Later, he adds: "It was assumed that I was professional simply because I was in the company, but I was an amateur."

He was also a jumper, what ballet people sometimes call an "en l'air dancer." From the outset of his career, the explosive brilliance of his jump and the particular kind of athleticism that it suggested were the sources of a powerful connection with his audience. To say that a dancer is an athlete can mean all sorts of things. The quality of Villella's movement did not remind his fans of any individual sport, such as long-distance swimming, in which the contender strives for perfect symmetry of impulses and races against a clock. Villella's thrilling jump had an emotional resonance to it, as if he'd been kicked or punched into space, and he would rebound on the landings like a soccer ball off a goalie's head. He always seemed to be naturally on edge, unstudied in his dynamic responses and his daring. His energy was unpredictable, asymmetrical, and aggressively conversational. Imaginatively, his dancing had a social dimension. He was always an opponent.

That he happened to be well-proportioned offset his relatively small stature for ballet. (He is five foot eight.) By using his comparatively long legs carefully, he could give the illusion of dancing big. His handsome head—with its high cheekbones, thick, dark hair, and a huge grin—was not crucial to his stardom, but it was extremely useful. In ballet, sexual attractiveness is the product of health, energy, skeletal proportions, and the richness of character suggested by the facility with which one moves. Onstage, Villella was a "rascal," to use Balanchine's word about him—a rascal with the affectionate overtones of a Jelly Roll Morton catch-phrase ("you rascal, you"). He looked like he was getting away with something.

EDWARD VILLELLA IN *PRODIGAL SON*

To the young Peter Martins, studying him in 1967, at the peak of Villella's career, what Villella got away with was classical dancing. "NYCB was supposedly a company without stars, but Villella was a star and in a particularly American way," Martins wrote in his memoir, *Far from Denmark*:

> What I saw was rough-edged, overwhelming energy, full-out brio and excitement. None of his dancing was clean, in the old-fashioned sense that I had been bred in. He was a magnificent animal, but with an American elegance and refinement. Here was someone with city street energy, who hadn't been brought up in the tradition-bound, sheltered, directed, somewhat protected environment that I had. One benefit it gave him was real freedom to define for himself how to use the academic dance vocabulary.

Martins's appreciation of Villella's dancing was rooted in a sense of its difference from his own dancing. "What I had been used to valuing was careful drawing and detailing dance, in the way I tried to make and shape my dancing," he writes:

> This included proper body alignment in all positions, keeping the correct shape while moving, soft landings. Villella's dancing was not hindered by these kinds of concerns, and it made no difference in the world, or rather, this couldn't be held against him, for I had never any doubt that he was a great dancer. What I had to learn was to stretch and redefine my conception of dancing.
>
> So, he totally baffled and awed me, by defying all the rules of everything I had been taught was classical ballet. I was intrigued with this mystery, and his effect on the audience was proof positive of the

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enormous power of his dancing. Villella was undeniable. I saw him fly through the air, turn blindingly fast, increase and decrease speed with unbelievable facility. I saw an intensity and electricity that threw everything before it, and that made new rules for itself.

Prodigal Son shows, ironically, that while Martins was envying Villella's freedom from the academy, Villella was attempting to acquire everything by which Martins felt constrained. And he had to: his body was rebelling against his will. Around 1960 Villella began to suffer muscle cramps so intense that he could no longer dance fully in both class and rehearsals. He began to walk through rehearsals—to mark the movement. "Pain was a constant," he writes of that period. "The more I danced the more I hurt." Then, "the glimmer of a heretical—and somewhat horrifying—idea began to form in my mind: Balanchine's class was hurting me and was contributing to my difficulties." The following passage is the best-written in the book, and the most damning:

> Balanchine's focus in these classes was mainly on the women. Because his ballerinas were long-legged and coltish, they were kind of splayed, in dancer's jargon, "all over the place," arms and legs waving. He was trying to get a better articulation of position, to facilitate moving from position to position without sacrificing speed. He wanted speed, so he just had everyone do everything fast. But a driver can't start a car at 100 miles an hour. He must go through first, second, and third gears. And the engine must be warmed up slowly, the oil flowing and all the mechanics working properly before a car hits the highway. Balanchine had no regard for that. He led us out onto that highway at high speed without warming up the engine. And for me, in particular, it was terrible because my muscles were so sensitive, raw, and hardened; they had nothing to build on.
>
> I got to the point where I could barely move, and I couldn't even tell if my feet were pointing or not. My legs were numb between my lower calves and ankles, and because my metatarsals had sustained contusions and some of the bones were broken, I lost the ability to grip the floor with my feet. Every fiber of every muscle was taut, and it became more and more difficult to warm up and make my muscles flexible and easy. They retained their tension permanently, it seemed, and they'd begin to spasm at any time of the day or night. At first in class, I had been able to do a barre (which was usually easy and warming), get to the center, and perform the small jumps. But by the time I got to the big jumps, the spasms occurred. After a while, in Balanchine's class, they started earlier and earlier; eventually they'd begin as soon as I left the barre. Then they started at the end of the barre, until—I couldn't believe it!—one day my muscles spasmed doing my first demi-plié, the first exercise in class. These weren't tiny twinges, they were massive contractions. To my further horror, my legs no longer shaped themselves into smooth lines. Before my eyes, my muscles clumped, tightened, and protruded in knots at the tops of my thighs. Enormous, well-defined, solid lumps with ridges and valleys rose up out of my legs, the size of golf balls.

When I first read these lines, I couldn't quite take them in. How was it possible that a ballet master of Balanchine's knowledge and experience could permit damage of this kind to a performer? Is Villella misremembering, or dramatizing the situation out of proportion? But I have come to the conclusion, consulting also other memoirs of dancing for Balanchine, that Villella's account sounds so persuasive because it is true. That is, true for male virtuoso jumpers. In *I Remember Balanchine*, the dancer Robert Weiss recalls:

> Balanchine's was not a class to make your body respond as a performer's must respond, to actually help you do his choreography. What is hard to get at technically is the jumping, the turning, the speed—all the things he wanted. Those qualities are very hard to achieve, and it takes years of training your body slowly. You can't start out dancing in that way. But that's what Balanchine wanted. His short cut was "Just do it." And if it looks right for the moment, then that's enough. If you were Suzanne Farrell, that was fine. She was long and limber and loose, and no matter how he jammed her body, it didn't hurt. But if you were Eddie Villella or if you were me, you couldn't take those classes more than twice in a week and do them full out.

Looking back, Villella feels that he should have stopped dancing for a while. (Erik Bruhn counseled him as much.) But he was young and ambitious, and he was afraid that to stop at all meant to stop forever. That forced four-year hiatus at college was still fresh in his mind. And so he persevered. He took classes with other teachers at SAB. He consulted doctors, chiropractors, osteopaths, and various kinds of exercise therapists. He tried taking another class right before Balanchine's, as a warm-up.

It didn't help at all. Still, he hung on to Balanchine's classes because they were more than maintenance sessions, more, even, than choreographic workshops for Balanchine. They were the most important forum for ongoing communication between the master and his dancers. It was in his company classes that Balanchine learned of his dancers' daily physical and psychological readiness for their work, and it was there that they learned something about the new ballets that were on his mind, his thoughts about their current performances of older ballets, as well as his preferences concerning dancers outside City Ballet, his lessons on life, and inklings of his moods. "Balanchine's classes were the heart and soul of the company," Villella writes. "By not attending them, I'd be missing out on what he had to say, and more, separating myself from him and the company."

Villella does not specify how long his tortures lasted. He does say that in the winter of 1960 Balanchine told him privately that a new teacher was coming to visit from Denmark. His name was Stanley Williams, he was a product of the Royal Danish Ballet, and Balanchine added that "he knows how to work with dancers, how to make people move." Williams, for Villella, was an immediate revelation. "Halfway through the barre, I said to myself, I know this is it," he writes. "This is what I've been searching for." What Williams succeeded in doing was to take the concepts that had seemed whimsical to Villella in Balanchine's classes and demonstrate their logic through patient analysis and crystal-clear presentation. Unlike Balanchine, Williams worked methodically to warm up the dancer's body. Both Villella's anguished muscles and his restless mind responded gratefully. Villella began to study privately with Williams. He followed Williams back to Denmark to continue lessons, even though he courted Balanchine's anger, as well as gossip that the two were lovers. For Villella, however, there was no choice. In working with Williams, he could pursue the concept that "slower is faster." He could study turnout from the skeleton outward. He could discover how to perform properly the fundamental brushing movement of the leg called battement tendu. He could remake his body so that it was strong enough to serve him for a while. And it did serve him until 1975, when he was forced into retirement owing to a worn-out hip.

The one thing that Villella could not attain was Balanchine's forgiveness "for not praying at his altar." But as Villella saw it, he had no choice:

> All I wanted to do was please him. But I was not willing to destroy myself in order to do so. I was dealing with survival. The end result was critical. I was not willing to be a device for a couple of years. In a way, one can look at it like that. We were all devices for his choreographic genius, all of us in the company pressed into his service. I wanted to serve, but not to the point of destroying myself. I would be a very angry son of a bitch right now if I had made any

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other choice. I would have been finished with bravura dancing in three to five years and would have functioned in a limited capacity with an abbreviated repertory. I would have been very, very bitter.

Actually, Williams gave Villella more than that. He helped Villella to lengthen his muscles and to develop the lyrical approach to the linking of movement that is appropriate to a *danseur noble*, the most aristocratic kind of male classical dancer, as opposed to the brasher and less prestigious *demi-caractère* dancer that Villella had at first seemed cut out to be.

While Martins, who as a child had studied with Williams in Denmark, was trying to shake off some of his reserve and add more Villella to his movement, Villella was working to add more Martins. The crossover point seems to have been the title role of *Apollo*. Villella and Martins have danced Apollo in very different ways. Each casts a fascinated, and jealous, eye on the other. "I'm convinced Balanchine never described Apollo as a rascal to Peter Martins," Villella writes. "He was telling me to be myself in the role: a young, lower-middle-class youth from the streets of Queens who played sandlot baseball, brawled, and boxed." (During his years as an undergraduate at the Maritime College in Throgs Neck, Villella was a welterweight boxing champion as well as a letterman on the varsity baseball team.) Yet Martins says otherwise. After his first performance with the New York City Ballet in 1967, Balanchine gave Martins some notes:

> To summarize, he told me I was dancing *Apollo* too classically, and I was not giving it the suggestions of character and imagery that he had built in. Each step and phrase demanded a positive, clear accent and a strong attack. The whole role should be danced crisply and with firm definition, no slurring of any movement. My feet should move with the kind of force needed to punt a football or to sidekick it down a field. My legs were to be bent sometimes—they shouldn't be classically beautiful, but should be shaped to a charged effect. They could be thought of as powerfully made, abstract shapes. Don't always turn out, turn in.
>
> Throughout the ballet, Apollo is exploring, testing possibilities. There are stabs and mistakes and awkwardnesses, but the movement is to be urgent, not tentative. I had been trying to make everything beautiful and grand, and he demanded shapes that looked grotesque but were packed with energy.

When you read Martins and Villella together, you start to understand the shift in performing style that seems to have gone into gear for Balanchine's men around the Stravinsky Festival in 1972. If your god of the dance—your Apollo—is Edward Villella, then you look for impetus and dynamism in the foreground of the dancing and the perfection of line as a background goal. If your god of the dance is Peter Martins, the priorities are reversed.

I think of a memorable moment in *Apollo* when the young god pumps his outstretched hands open and closed. Villella remembers Balanchine telling him that the pumping movement derived from the sight of neon signs in Piccadilly Circus that Balanchine enjoyed on his defection to Europe from impoverished Russia during the 1920s. They looked to the dumbstruck young man like twinkling stars. When Villella did it, you could feel the gesture as an example of actual behavior—as if Apollo had just taken off a boxing glove and was working out the kinks in his fingers. Martins, on the other hand, used to do the pumping in a dry, semaphoric manner, to much cooler effect. Is such a difference related to the difference of temperament between the men as it comes across in writing? Martins speaks very eloquently of Balanchine as a visionary of images and a translator of them to individual dancers, yet he rarely discusses specific imagery in Balanchine's work or his own. Villella is always ruminating about technical concepts, yet when he speaks about Balanchine's ballets, he is continuously immersed in gestural imagery and meaning.

For the most part, though, *Prodigal Son* goes for straightforward chronological narrative and a kind of therapeutic view of human relationships. It doesn't relate Villella's jokes well—like the one about the time Melissa Hayden had him bend over and stuck him with a shot of vitamin B-12—and it makes him sound grouchy about Balanchine, even though he's telling us that he has come to terms with both his own tendency to bring down problems on himself and with the really awful manipulations he was subject to at the New York City Ballet. The goal of Villella's book is selfless, to document a moment, a "golden age" that Villella experienced intimately, but the ideal slips away in the retelling. The detachment of the narrative often gives way to the dancer's contemplation of his hurt feelings, his compromised position, his sense of powerlessness. He wants to uncover unpleasant truths and be loved for doing so. Sometimes the tone of the writing is even-tempered and sometimes it is sore-headed; sometimes this seems to be the tragedy of a son's downward path to wisdom, and sometimes the farce of a father's efforts to rise above his grudges by democratically distributing the blame for his anxieties. The text has the literary shape of a fence cobbled together from mismatched doors. Its moral outlook keeps getting reduced to the question, was it good for me?

In Balanchine's ballet *Prodigal Son*, a reunion is effected between the son and his father. In Villella's book *Prodigal Son*, the reunion is between Villella (who is now founding artistic director of the Miami City Ballet) and the Balanchine technique that is the company's daily bread, the fuel that permits it to dance Balanchine in the theater. Still, a touch of resentment lingers. "Balanchine didn't leave me anything in the legal sense, but as a dancer his ballets belong to me," Villella writes. "In my company, we treat these ballets as if they are ours, and that is how I continue to serve my artistic father."

These are the last words in the story. After reading the other memoirs, I can see where Villella's feeling of resentment at Balanchine's emotional exclusion of him is justified. Certainly the personal problems between Villella and Balanchine over Villella's adoption of Stanley Williams as a teacher have been pondered by an entire generation of male Balanchine dancers. "Balanchine adored Misha," one former dancer recalls in *I Remember Balanchine*. That

Snow Fall

What I wanted seemed little enough at the time.
There was snow on the ground, grayish and sticking
to the muds—the promise of plenty to come.
Snow gathered already in the corners of sills.
When she spoke what we had sensed for weeks

without saying, her voice fell clear, unwavering, soft
as the day. It hardly had to do with us anymore.
The crazy tilt of the carport across the alley
was all I could see for a while, the weight
on its wobbly roof like a terrible joke.

But that was wrong—that was wrong. Before long
the snows shook down on what we had done.
What I wanted was to ignore it all, sit there
in stillness, shepherding logs to the fire
while the old ones went pink to white to gray.

DAVID BAKER

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dancer goes on to note that it was Balanchine's idea to have Baryshnikov join City Ballet, and that Balanchine frequently invited Baryshnikov to dinner. "He loved [Baryshnikov]," the dancer says. "He loved watching him dance. He loved having him in ballets... I think it was like a father-son thing ... I saw him with Mr. B. a lot. I never saw anything complicated. I saw complicated situations with Edward Villella. I think it was clear that Balanchine was jealous of Eddie's fame. I think with Eddie it was some weird kind of love-hate thing." Villella came along at a more delicate point in Balanchine's thinking, perhaps. On the other hand, he came along at just the right moment to get the greatest collection of new roles that Balanchine ever made for a male en l'air dancer. Baryshnikov got none. The most damning thing that one can say about Edward Villella is that, of the two men, it is he, the more privileged, who seems the needier.

MINDY ALOFF is a regular contributor to *The New Yorker.*

The Counterlives

BY ALAN MINTZ

Mr. Mani
by A. B. Yehoshua
translated by Hillel Halkin

(Doubleday, 368 pp., $22.50)

From the beginning of his career, A. B. Yehoshua has been proudly identified on the dust jackets of his books, in Israel and in the United States, as the scion of a Sephardic family that has lived in Jerusalem for five generations. Not until recently, however, has this aristocratic heritage found much of an echo in his writings. The heroes of his stories are schoolteachers, university lecturers, army officers, lawyers, writers, students, and other members of the professional classes who display no special signs of their ethnic origins. As a public figure, moreover, Yehoshua has been identified with, and assimilated into, the Ashkenazic intelligentsia of his country, which thinks of itself as Israeli more than anything else.

Yehoshua's reticence on this score has been remarkable for two reasons. The decade of the 1970s, when his authority in Israeli literature was firmly established, was precisely the period during which Sephardim and Oriental Jews—the terms are used interchangeably by some—became a conspicuous cultural and political force in Israeli society. Emerging during those years as a numerical majority newly alive to its interests as a group, Sephardim helped to throw Labor out and bring the Likud (and particularly Menachem Begin) in, and were not timid about demanding recognition for the past glories of their culture. (As one measure of the Sephardic ascendancy, one might cite the public hoopla—and the serious discussion—that has been in the works for several years in preparation for the commemoration this year of the five centuries since the expulsion of Spanish Jewry, whose "golden age" is the font of Sephardic pride.)

If Yehoshua were an author who set his fiction at a historical remove from the present, or who was concerned mainly with the inner life, his failure to deal with this phenomenon might not call attention to itself. But his fiction of this period is preoccupied with the actualities of Israeli society: the Yom Kippur War, the War of Attrition that preceded it, the great stock market speculations and the growing prosperity of the middle classes, the restiveness of Israel's Arabs, and more. His stunning story "Early in the Summer of 1970," which was published in 1971, is typical of Yehoshua's desire to ground his fictions in a precise moment in the life of Israeli culture *and* to make that moment just yesterday. Yet in all this emphasis on social forces and historical actualities, the rise of the Sephardim did not find much of a place in his work.

This began to change several years ago. In 1987 Yehoshua published *Five Seasons,* a quietly beautiful novel about a Sephardic civil servant in the year after his German-born wife's death from cancer. Though the novel's focus lies inward, largely on psychic dramas of need and denial, its protagonist's Sephardic origin was not incidental to

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his identity. Still, little in that work prepared his readers for the frontal assault on the mystique of Sephardism mounted by Yehoshua in *Mr. Mani*, his new novel. It is as if he has attempted in one stroke to make up for the cumulative inattention of the past.

This is a Sephardic novel par excellence. Playing with the conventions of the family saga, Yehoshua's novel devotes equal attention to five generations of a family of Spanish exiles who emigrated from Salonika to Jerusalem in the middle of the nineteenth century. The cultural and historical description is thick, and the will to engage the meaning of Sephardism is unmistakable. It is no wonder that *Mr. Mani* has struck a chord in Israel, where it was a runaway best seller as well as a critical success. Yehoshua's novel is a welcome sign of the maturing of Israeli literature. It is a document of true cultural openness.

The motives for undertaking this project appear to be as much biographical as social. *Mr. Mani* carries a dedication to Yehoshua's father, "a man of Jerusalem and a lover of its past." A member of the fourth of the five generations of the Yehoshua family in Jerusalem, Yaakov Yehoshua was a professional Orientalist and an amateur ethnologist who published a series of books that affectionately chronicled the neighborhoods and the folkways of the old Sephardic settlement in his native city. By his own account, these compilations meant little to Yehoshua during his father's lifetime, and it was only after his death that the son was moved to explore his exotic patrimony.

Still, as we would expect from a writer of Yehoshua's genius, the new novel is not a simple act of homage. The statement it makes about Sephardism is equivocal, and in the end rather slippery. Sephardim in this novel are portrayed as cosmopolitans, whose worldliness has allowed them to remain free of the ravages of ideology and to glimpse historical options not seen by others at the turning points of history. Yet at the same time their susceptibility to obsessional notions and obsessional desires prevents them from making an impact on history—indeed, puts their very survival in jeopardy. The novel is, in the best sense, something of a tease. Yehoshua is mixing up the basic stuff of modern Jewish history with the basic stuff of human nature, and refusing on principle to underscore the presence of some grand design.

I suspect that this subordination of historical schemata to the energies of reading is at the heart of what Yehoshua is up to here. For *Mr. Mani* is wonderfully knotted in ways that are both enthralling and challenging. This is not a conventionally constructed novel. It is composed of five "conversations" that take place between 1848 and 1982. In each case, Yehoshua has provided the speech of only one of the two interlocutors; the reader is thus required to infer the words of the other participant from the rejoinders, the hesitations, and the annoyances of the audible partner. And each of these dramatic half-conversations is preceded and followed by informative notes written in a dry journalistic style, which document the biographical events of the interlocutors before and after their exchange.

One can imagine, and be a little daunted by, the occasions for invention presented by a novel with five different speakers from five different historical periods. Moreover, the original language of each conversation is different (Hebrew, German, English, Yiddish, and Ladino), which gives a sense of the challenges that Yehoshua has set for himself. Yehoshua draws upon Hebrew's many layers of development to obtain just the right degrees of archaism for his different speakers; he uses untranslated idioms from the original language to create an atmosphere of linguistic authenticity; and he draws liberally on the kinds of cultural reflexes and habits of speech that differentiate milieus and mentalities one from another—the world of a pious Ottoman Jewish merchant, for example, from the world of an enlightened Polish Jewish physician.

What is a formidable challenge for the author turns out, for the very same reasons, to be a golden opportunity for his translator. Hillel Halkin has as good a time rendering the clipped understatement of a British military lawyer during the First World War as he does with the tendentious historical musings of a German officer in the Second World War. In the many translations from Hebrew that he has done over the years, Halkin has been at his best when his gifts for idiomatic usage could be released in the representation of speech. *Mr. Mani* allows him full scope, and he has achieved what seems to me to be his finest translation so far.

Yehoshua's most radical tampering with the conventions of the genre—his debt to Faulkner is profound and long acknowledged—is manifest in two related acts of decentering. The novel is ostensibly about five generations of the Mani family, yet with the partial exception of the last conversation, the Manis are not the speakers, they are the ones spoken about. The participants in the conversations are outsiders whose lives intersect meaningfully but serendipitously with the affairs of the Manis. However powerfully dramatized, the Manis are viewed indirectly, through the eyes of others, and they are never allowed to be embodied in the marvelously vivid speech given to those who observe them.

Perhaps the greatest dislocation of the novel, however, is Yehoshua's decision to tell history backward. The first conversation in *Mr. Mani* is set on a kibbutz in the Negev in 1982, the second in 1967, then 1919, 1899, and finally 1848. For Yehoshua this "counterdirection" to history is not just a literary device, but a controlling idea of the novel at every level.

Because the plot is given backward, it needs to be unwound and laid out consecutively, if its true strangeness is to be appreciated. Here it goes from the beginning. In the 1840s a young man, Yosef Mani, comes to Jerusalem from Salonika to marry, and stays on in the Holy City, obsessed with the idea that the Arabs are really Jews who have forgotten their Jewishness. Concerned that the young couple have produced no children, the young man's father, Abraham Mani, journeys to Jerusalem, only to discover that the marriage has not been consummated because of his son's homosexuality. The son is killed by the Muslim guardians of the Temple Mount in an obscurely self-sacrificial act; the father then sleeps with his daughter-in-law, who gives birth to a son named Moshe. The boy grows up to be a gynecologist who establishes a lying-in hospital in which women from all the nationalities in Jerusalem come to give birth under enlightened conditions. Fascinated by the figure of Herzl, the doctor travels to Basel for the third Zionist Congress of 1899, and there he meets a well-to-do brother and sister from Galicia, who return with him to Jerusalem. He falls desperately in love with the young woman and commits suicide in the Beirut railway station as the brother and sister are about to return to Europe.

His orphaned son, Yosef, grows up among the polyglot of Christian, Jewish, and Arab groups that make up Jerusalem during the first decade of this century. The trauma of witnessing a woman giving birth in his father's old clinic transforms Yosef into a self-described *Homo politicus*, and he goes to Beirut to study the laws of the many nations that will determine the fate of the Middle East. Having made himself an indispensable translator in Allenby's advancing army, he offers his services as a spy to the Turks in exchange for the

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opportunity to address gatherings of Arab villagers throughout the countryside. His message to his sleepy and uncomprehending listeners is that Palestine, in the wake of the Balfour Declaration, will be divided among those who are wise enough to grasp the opportunity, and that the Arabs will lose out unless they awake to the meaning of the hour.

Yosef Mani's sedition is discovered, and he is sentenced by a British military court to banishment on the island of Crete. He dies of a heart attack when the German army invades the island in 1941, but not before instructing the paratrooper who has captured his family in the history of the Minoan ruins at Knossos where he has made a living as a tourist guide. His son Efrayim tries to convince his Nazi captor that he is no longer a Jew because he has willfully canceled his Jewishness and become, simply, a person; the attempt succeeds only in part. Although his wife and child manage to escape to Palestine, Efrayim Mani is deported and dies when his ship is blown up by British pilots.

The final act unfolds in 1982 in Jerusalem, where Gavriel Mani, Efrayim's son, serves as a judge in the district courts. His son Efi is a young university instructor who has an affair with one of his students, a women named Hagar from a kibbutz, whose father had been killed during the Six-Day War. The son is called up to a resented reserve duty in the invasion of Lebanon just as Hagar comes to believe that she is pregnant by him. She journeys to Jerusalem on the pretext of delivering a message from the son, and finds the father preparing to commit suicide. She stubbornly attaches herself to Judge Mani for several days, thinking all the while that she carries within her the seed of a new Mani. Hagar's pregnancy turns out to be illusory, but she later does in fact become pregnant and gives birth to Roni Mani, even though his father refuses to marry her.

The saga of the Manis is deliciously convoluted enough on its own terms, without Yehoshua's trying to stuff the jack back in the box and tell the story in reverse. But he has decided to make this the structural principle on which the novel stands or falls. Fortunately, the novel delivers; it gets progressively more interesting the further back you go. The fifth and final conversation, set in the courtyards of a Jerusalem that still seems medieval, is positively breathtaking in the elemental dramas that unfold within it, though it is also maddeningly elusive when it comes to answers.

It is exactly the expectation of answers that is set up by Yehoshua's history-in-reverse method. *Mr. Mani* starts out in the moral confusion brought on by the invasion of Lebanon, which was the first Arab-Israeli war really initiated by Israel, and then moves back, conversation by conversation, through the developments leading to the creation of the Jewish state: the Holocaust, the Balfour Declaration, the rise of political Zionism, the emergence of modern nationalism following the Congress of Vienna. The novel, in short, peels away the layers of historical inevitability. It rolls back the triumph of Western ideology, as it moves us closer to a time before the final consolidation of nations and national identities. And Yehoshua follows this line, provocatively and perversely, not into the recesses of the Ashkenazic diaspora, out of which modern Zionism issued, but into the world of Sephardic Jewry, which historically composed the largest segment of the continuous Jewish settlement in Jerusalem, though a smaller percentage of world Jewry. He gives us Jerusalem before Zionism, and places within it an hypostatized Sephardism whose growing entanglement with Western Zionism can be traced through stages of resistance and capitulation.

Just what, then, does this journey upstream into the heart of Sephardism reveal? The answer, as I have intimated, goes in two directions. On their behalf, the novel makes claims for a superior worldliness about the Sephardim, a quality that enabled them to see alternatives to the ideology-driven march of Western history. The Jews of the Ottoman lands lived in closer and less strained contact with Muslim peoples, as well as with the Christians, the other principal minority. Their mercantile travels gave them an international perspective and a sensitivity to the markers between national groups.

In contrast to the Judaism of their Eastern European co-religionists, the religious convictions of the Sephardim were deeply but less fanatically held, and they were less insulated from the world. When religious faith collapsed for a segment of Russian Jewry at the end of the nineteenth century, political Zionism emerged as a substitute for failed messianic beliefs and turned into an ideological movement. The Sephardim, by contrast, chose a path of accommodation. Rather than rejecting religion and adopting secular replacements for it, they made room for elements of modernity alongside their family-centered piety. Zionism came to them naturally: it was not a radical redefinition of the Jewish people, but an extension of a primordial attachment to an ideal geography and a real place. (The novel excels in conveying the gritty dreaminess of Sephardic Jerusalem before the arrival of the Zionists—a reorientation for Yehoshua, whose previous writings have mostly been set in the secular "Labor" city of Haifa.)

In *Mr. Mani* this set of ascribed traits plays itself out in the peculiar "alternative" political notions placed in the minds of the earlier generations of the Manis. Young Yosef Mani, who comes to Jerusalem in the 1840s, is convinced that the native Ishmaelites are really Jews who refuse to remember that they are Jews and must be chastised for their forgetfulness. The clinic founded by his son, the gynecologist Moshe Mani, is

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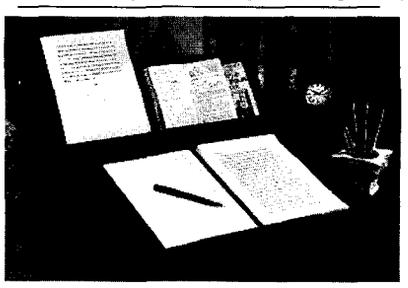

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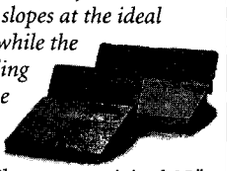

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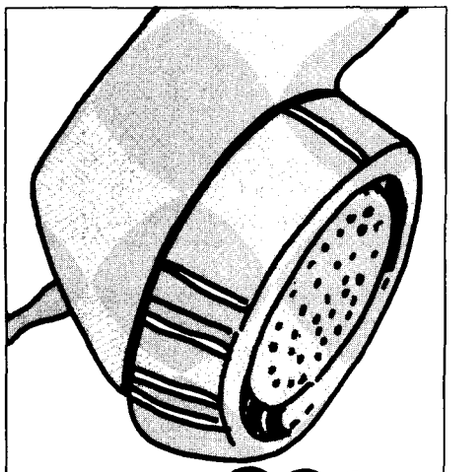

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described as "multiethnic, syncretistic, ecumenical." Women from all communities of Jerusalem are drawn to give birth there because of the methods of natural childbirth instituted by Dr. Mani, as if to imply that the pain inscribed in nature can somehow be alleviated by the commingled openness embodied by the clinic.

This vision receives its most articulate—and most transparent—expression in the third generation with Yosef Mani's self-ascribed calling as a *Homo politicus*. To prepare himself for his role in life, he drifts "among the identities of Jerusalem while working out his politics and acquiring languages as though they were a batch of keys to a house with many doors." The message he delivers—in his acquired Arabic—to his hastily rousted Arab village listeners is peculiarly prescient for 1918:

> "Who are ye? Awake, before it is too late and the world is changed beyond recognition! Get ye an identity, and be quick!" And he takes Balfour's declaration from his pocket, translated into Arabic, and reads it without any explanation, and says: "This country is yours and it is ours; half for you and half for us." And he points toward Jerusalem, which they see shrouded in fog on the mountain, and he says, "The Englishman is there, the Turk is here; but all will depart and leave us; awake, sleep not!"

He is tried and banished by the British more for the loss of cannons that his espionage causes than for stirring the *fellahin* into a nationalist fervor, which he of course fails to do. In later generations this catholic vision is muted, and survives only in Judge Mani's fondness for the old neighborhoods of his city, and in his son's opposition to the adventure in Lebanon.

These notions are never fully explored and remain fuzzily idiosyncratic. And Yehoshua has a lot to answer for in using ideas that have little historical basis and are rather transparent retrojections of his dovish politics. Still, his interesting point is that at crucial junctures of modern history, the Manis, because of who they are and where they come from, are able to see things that are invisible to the majoritarian Zionist movement. They contemplate an alternative path, while the movement forecloses possibilities and lurches forward toward the consolidation of a uninational state condemned to unremitting tension with its neighbors and with a growing minority of its own citizens.

If this were all, then the Manis would simply be true heroes for those who see Israel as Yehoshua does. But the novel thankfully complicates things. It gives its protagonists unsimplified and interesting lives. The Manis—the earlier generations—are presented as being grandiose, ineffectual, and obsessed in ways that work to undercut the legitimacy of their visionary politics. It all goes back to the first Yosef Mani, the one who believed that the Arabs are Jews who have forgotten their Jewishness. The father calls the son's notions about the Arabs an idée fixe, and his journey from Salonika to Jerusalem is a quest to ensure that the marriage "be[ ]s seed and not just idées fixes." His failure to do so, and his guilt over impregnating his daughter-in-law, lead him later in life often to contemplate suicide. And so the urge to suicide, obscurely enacted by Judge Mani over a century later, is virtually imprinted in the genetic code of the Manis.

Yehoshua draws a significant distinction between ideologies and idées fixes. Ideologies are what Russian Jews have; they generate movements, which in turn exert enormous collective force on the face of history. Idées fixes are what the Manis have; they are idiosyncratic notions held by the febrile minds of solitary men who endanger themselves on behalf of their ideas but have little influence on the world. Because their notions come to naught, their decision to pursue their ideas at the expense of the preservation of their species is doubly self-defeating. For, faced with the choice to sow their seed or sow their ideas, they consistently do the latter. In contrast to received notions of potent Oriental patriarchs propagating vast clans, the Manis have to be tricked into reproducing. From the father who sleeps with his daughter-in-law at one end of the novel to the kibbutz student who begets Judge Mani an illegitimate grandson at the other, this is a family whose dynastic line hangs by a very tattered thread.

In fact, as the scholar Arnold Band has pointed out, *Mr. Mani* is a rather unsparing send up of the very concept of the pure Sephardic, the *Sefaradi tahor*. It is the practice of some Jews who trace their lineage directly back to the exiles from Spain (as opposed to the mass of North African immigrants) to place two initials at the end of their name designating their distinguished and unalloyed ancestry. If Yehoshua's Manis stand in some paradigmatic relation to the Sephardim as a group, then their lineage is anything but pure and unadulterated. Besides homosexuality, incest, illegitimacy, suicide, and the various forms of surrogacy that reside in their past, for at least two of the genera-

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tions the mothers are not even Sephardim.

The novel, which poses the choice between sexuality and political consciousness, is preoccupied with the idea of the womb, not just as the birthing house of biological life but as a kind of primordial soup of latent possibilities from which national identities emerge. The fact that the action in *Mr. Mani* begins (and the story ends) in 1848, the year of nationalist rebellions, is no coincidence. This notion is given a gloss of pseudoscientific respectability by the speaker of the second conversation (the weakest of the five), a young intellectual German soldier, one Egon Bruner, who is part of the police force occupying Crete during World War II. Recalling the account in Greek mythology of the birth of Europa in the waters of the island, Bruner regrets his country's appeal for legitimacy to Teutonic myths and bids it turn southward toward the restorative purity of Hellenic culture. Only by thrusting itself into this recumbent blue womb of civilization, he reasons, can the motherland renew itself.

Coming across the Manis, the soldier is at first incensed that a "lot of beastly Jews" had gotten there first and sullied his adoptive ancient womb. He is mollified, however, by Efrayim Mani's assertion that he has "canceled" his Jewishness—another variation on the idée fixe—and therefore poses no threat. For if the self, by an act of will, can indeed be separated from culture, then it is good news for Germany, which could "return to the starting point and become *simply human* again, a new man who can cancel the scab of history that sticks to us like dandruff."

Bruner's obsessions are as dangerously perverted as Nazi racialist theory, but ironically they serve to point to what may be the final meaning of the Manis in Yehoshua's difficult novel. They are identified with matters of the womb because they represent a body of latent possibility in modern Jewish life. Ideology-driven Jewish political nationalism has closed crucial doors as it has marched forward to the constricted present. The Manis, however, remain closer to the womb of culture, their identity less differentiated and more libidinally chaotic. Yehoshua appears to champion a principle of polymorphousness that plays over both the construction of selves and the construction of societies. He seems to prefer a succession of identities to a secret single essence.

Yet despite this implied advocacy, we are never allowed to forget that history was not made by the Manis and their like, and for this reason Yehoshua has made his novel not theirs alone. Their existence is dependent upon—and owned by—the speakers of the conversations about them. It is not an accident that these speakers belong to groups that occupy positions of power (though already waning) during the periods in which the conversations take place: European Zionists, the British, the Germans, and the kibbutz movement. And so the perspectives multiply and shift back and forth, forcing the reader to construct the novel as he goes.

Yehoshua has packed his book with no small measure of games and devices, but there is rarely the sense (which one gets with some younger Israeli writers) that he has given himself over to postmodernist antics. The novel's invitation to the reader to participate in the production of its meaning seems to me quite sincere. For, despite the political messages contained in the book, Yehoshua does not know in the end what to make of his elusive Manis. They remain vague and fantastic. This novel is as much about the challenges and the pleasures of reading modern Jewish history as it is about modern Jewish history itself. Put another way, we are lucky to have *Mr. Mani* and not just the Manis.

ALAN MINTZ is the Braun Professor of Modern Hebrew Literature at Brandeis University.

TRB *continued from page 6*

too much on current consumption and not enough on investment for the future—a trend that's gotten worse over the past twelve years. A so-called "capital budget" that would track this distinction is not a bad idea. But it doesn't justify permanent and growing deficits.

House Budget Committee chairman Leon Panetta and Congressional Budget Office director Robert Reischauer both have produced detailed descriptions of what balancing the budget by 1997 would actually entail. These gruesome slash-horror tales are intended to sober up the debate over the amendment—although, once again, both Panetta and Reischauer say they favor a balanced budget itself. The Panetta and Reischauer scenarios are a justified rebuke to President Bush and others, mostly Republicans, who continue to insist, fatuously, that a balanced budget can be achieved without much inconvenience.

But what also struck me while perusing the various options is how undramatic they seem, at least compared with the feverish rhetoric all around us these days about how the government is in a crisis, the people are rising in rebellion, life cannot go on this way, all politicians must be shot, we should all hold our breaths until a jug-eared shrimp from Texas arises to save humanity, etc., etc., etc.

F'rinstance. Panetta notes that $112 billion could be cut from the deficit over five years—about a fifth of the necessary total—by subjecting 85 percent of Social Security payments to the income tax. Right now Social Security is half-taxable for those over a certain income floor. But even if Social Security were fully taxable, those who depend on it for most of their income would barely be affected, since low-income people pay little or no income tax. Eighty-five cents on the dollar is approximately how much Social Security recipients are getting in excess of what they put in (and thus never paid taxes on originally), so it's reasonable to ask why it should be exempt now. More important, taxing it now would cause no one undue hardship.

Indeed, it's not very challenging to find $500 billion or $600 billion, which is what you need to balance the budget over five years, without causing anyone undue hardship. To be sure, you might cause a lot of balanced budget amendment supporters, who expect it to be completely painless, a rude surprise. But by then, for them, it would be too late. That's the idea.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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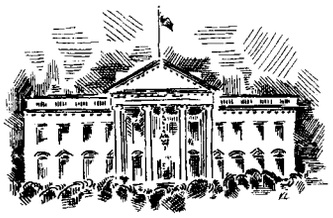
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Wascally Woss

COME NOVEMBER, IT LOOKS LIKE, the elephant and the donkey are lookin' to get their sorry gray butts kicked by a rampagin' ... a rampagin' what? Which of our furry or feathered friends ought to have the honor of becoming the official mascot of the Ross for Boss presidential campaign? The personal choice of the candidate himself would undoubtedly be the eagle, as in "Eagles don't flock" (ruggedly individualistic slogan of candidate) and *On Wings of Eagles* (drugstore paperback about candidate's hostage-freeing heroics). But that would be a little too contrived, don't you think? A bit of a cliché? No, the better way is to look for a creature that springs unbidden from the candidate's unconscious.

AS IT HAPPENS, PEROT IS HAUNTED by a beast along these very lines—a cute little monster from the id. In the payoff sound bite from his March 17 appearance at the National Press Club, the Texas Billionaire reminded the electorate of his up-front conditions for condescending to become our president. "If ordinary people in fifty states went out on the streets," the T.B. instructed, "on their own initiative, not programmed, not orchestrated like **rabbits** the way we try to do everything now, did it on their own and put me on the ballot in all fifty states—not forty-eight, not forty-nine, but fifty—then I would run." Good, good—but what color rabbits? Presciently, Perot had already given the answer, in the famous Larry King interview of February 20. "We're the owners of this country," he said. "We don't act like the owners. We act like **white rabbits** that get programmed by messages coming out of Washington."

ENCOURAGED BY RISING POLL numbers, Perot has been developing the leporine theme, especially with respect to the abortion issue. In another CNN interview, this one with Robert Novak, the T.B. argued that "there's far more to it than just the woman's choice. We are not **rabbits**. We are thinking, reasoning human beings." A few seconds later, driving the point home, he added: "It's more complex than just saying 'the woman's right.' We are not **rabbits**." On the line to Diane Rehm's call-in program on Washington's public radio station WAMU-FM, he put it this way: "Can we agree that each human life is precious? And surely we can. And can we agree that we are not **rabbits**?" A few days later, talking to Dan Balz of *The Washington Post*: "You will always hear me say never forget, we aren't **rabbits**, we are thinking, reasoning human beings.... Now, it is absolutely irresponsible for two thinking, reasoning human beings to get drunk, get high, get pregnant, and get an abortion just because they act like **rabbits**." And on a second appearance on Larry King's TV show, April 16: "We are not **rabbits**. We are thinking, reasoning human beings.... We aren't **rabbits**. Let's just—See, I can generally get a consensus on that, Larry." OK, Ross, have it your way: we aren't rabbits. Even—no, especially—those of us who are presidential candidates with unusually large ears.



AS EVERYONE knows, Perot has been getting a bit testy lately. ("You're off on an absolute **rabbit** chase," he snapped the other day when a CNN investigative reporter inquired about one of his quasi-military adventures.) But he was affable—expansive, even—when a caller on that April 16 Larry King show asked him if he belongs to any clubs that exclude Jews or blacks. "Yes, I do," he replied forthrightly:

> KING: And?
> PEROT: And I go there about once a year. And all my Jewish friends in Dallas, they've had a great deal of fun with me over this. If it bothers the people—
> KING: Why don't you quit?
> PEROT:—I will quit immediately. But I have to tell you this story. So my Jewish pals one day gave me a mezuzah as a gift, and they said, "Now you can put this on your door, Perot." And I said, "Well, which door?" They says, "Any door you want to." And this was all in great spirit, as you can imagine. So a few days go by and they come back to me. They all know that maybe once a year I'll go down there for a lunch or something like that. I don't play golf, don't have a golf locker. They all know that. And the reason we belong is, it's a good safe place for the children to swim—that sort of thing. They come back in a few days and say, "Perot, have you put your mezuzah up?" And I say, "Yes, it's up." They says, "Where did you put it?" I says, "I've got it on my locker door at the country club." And they all says, "My gosh, Perot, they'll throw you out!" I says, "No, nobody knows what it is. It's absolutely safe."
> KING: Why—Why—
> PEROT: So around Dallas it's not a problem. If it's a problem—
> KING: But why belong to a club that excludes anything, anyone?
> PEROT: The only reason is it's a safe—I have an interesting problem in terms of security—it's a safe place for my family to swim and do things like that. We don't use it that much. In terms of is it—I would sort of—You know, from my point of view, I'll save the dues.

Or was that "I'll save the Jews"? Either way, it must be acknowledged that Perot's jocular though unironic use of the some-of-my-best-friends defense is anachronistic at best. No doubt this reflects insularity rather than actual prejudice. (Perot is a deeply provincial figure.) It is harder to find a charitable explanation for his fantastic claim that his membership in restricted country clubs (not one but t of them, by the way) is dictated by the quest for a safe place to swim. If that is truly the grail he seeks, he needn't search so far. There is a perfectly adequate swimming pool on the grounds of his own house. It is not far from the tennis courts, hard by the riding stables, and is only a short walk from the two-story athletic complex containing basketball court, Nautilus machines, bowling alley, racquetball court, and weight room. And indoor swimming pool, in case the outdoor one has been seized by terrorists.

THE MASCOT QUESTION REMAINS. Some will object to the designation of the rabbit on the ground that Perot's feelings about the creature are in some sense negative. I admit that some of his statements might be open to such an interpretation. For example, his remark to a *Life* magazine interviewer in 1988 that "people don't change from lions into **rabbits** in midflight." (If they did: *On Wings of Rabbits*.) Or this comment six months ago, when he was telling the *L.A Times* that the research laboratories of American car and computer companies harbor too much irrelevant work: "You go back in research centers, electronic companies, car companies, you may find a guy with **white rabbits**. What does that have to do with making a better computer or a better car?" But a case can be made that the T.B. actually loves bunnies. How else to explain the news, reported in *Computerworld* for May 21, 1990, that a compute, firm called Atlantix Corp. has "named **Rabbit** Software Corp. founder and former executive Charles Robins as president"? The man from Rabbit was brought on board, the story continues, "in the wake of a major equity investment received in March from The Perot Group, an investment group headed by industry entrepreneur H. Ross Perot." Maybe the "H" stands for "Harvey."

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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BY ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Life in an Urban School District

[Today's guest column is by ***Richard A. DeColibus,*** *president of the Cleveland Federation of Teachers. It is excerpted from a letter he wrote earlier this year to State Representative Patrick A. Sweeney to protest a $3.7 million cut in Cleveland's school budget and a proposed law to use public funds to send children to private schools.]*

These are not good times for public education. All our best efforts threaten to be drowned in the rising tide of poverty and human misery our students experience at home and in their neighborhoods. While it is easy to attack the schools and say that we are at fault for pupils who do not come to school or do not learn, no one has yet told me how we are supposed to alter the new structure of the American family in order to produce children who are effective learners.

Contrary to what seems to be popular opinion, we are not simply a black hole which consumes money and produces nothing. Our per pupil expenditure of $6,112 is almost exactly in the middle of the county (16th out of 31 school districts). Our salaries for experienced teachers are in the lower third.

My best guess is that your next concern runs something like, "Well, you may get about the same amount of money as everybody else, but your test scores are abysmal so obviously you don't use what you get wisely." I'd be the last to claim we use every cent wisely since half my life seems to be a battle with a central office administration that consumes enormous amounts of financial resources to sustain itself at the expense of the educational programs. However, even if that is cleared up, our fundamental difficulty remains: How do you educate and train individuals who have no interest in being educated or trained?

I believe you understand that where the home does not provide a supportive environment, the child does not succeed, in school or in life. No doubt you're tired of hearing about it and consider it an excuse. Whether it is or not, it is a reality. Studies done in education, child development and anthropology support that conclusion.

If you believe we have not been successful in tailoring an educational structure to deal with this situation, you are correct. Neither has anybody else. Furthermore, it is hard even to convince people that we need to change. And if you clear that hurdle and get agreement on what the change ought to be, it still comes back to the parents. Let me correct that: It still comes back to the parent. In Cleveland, there are so few two-parent families with children in the schools that we no longer bother to use the plural.

A recent study done by researchers at Ohio State showed little correlation between per pupil expenditure and achievement. Oh, really? Good. Then give us the $11,422 per pupil Beachwood can afford to spend on its children. Since money doesn't matter, there should be no ill effects on Beachwood's student body.

What would I do with this windfall? The Business Roundtable says that every child must have an adult advocate. They are correct. The most troublesome pupils show amazing changes in attitude and behavior when paired with an adult who cares about their progress in school. In a 70,000-pupil district, we know from past experience that at least 30,000 of our students will not graduate unless we effectively intervene with a mentor.

Teachers can't do it. Most teachers make immense efforts to deal with students' social and emotional problems. But the number of children with problems and the depth and intractability of the problems are simply overwhelming. There is no time, and teachers are evaluated on student achievement through standardized test scores, not on solving student emotional crises. Find me 30,000 volunteer surrogate parents and I will agree with you that money won't matter because we will have what we need.

Would you like us to cut some frills? Find me a frill to cut.

Everyone wants us to "get back to the basics." Trust me, we're very basic. Our curriculum is so basic, it's primitive; what we do not offer these kids is criminal in its neglect. I'm not a fan of the "school should be fun" theory of education, but it doesn't hurt to give students a few options they might enjoy, like a real music or art program.

Would you like us to cut some frills? Find me a frill to cut. Indeed, one of our most vexing problems has been that the Ohio General Assembly insists that we do this or that and then declines to provide us the money to do it. It's not that what is mandated is unworthy or evil; we agree with virtually all of it. Of course we want to educate all handicapped children in special education units. We do. But you do not provide the extra funding for all the units we need so we must take the difference from the general fund. We want everyone who intends to drive on Ohio roads to have driver education; indeed, you told us we had to offer it. But you didn't give us enough funding to cover the cost. I don't believe it's unreasonable to ask you to fund what you demand.

It is the responsibility of the Ohio General Assembly to provide adequate and equitable funding for public education in Ohio. I submit to you that the current situation whereby school districts must constantly beg an electorate for school levy money is a failure of that charge. Furthermore, in Cleveland, where we have a horrendous poverty rate, a large proportion of retired and other people on fixed incomes and only 25 percent of taxpayers with one or more children in the school system, it may NEVER be possible to pass a levy. What, then, are we to do? Do more with less? You are the elected representative of many of these children; we are awaiting your solution.

MR. SHANKER'S COMMENTS APPEAR IN THIS AD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS. READER CORRESPONDENCE IS INVITED. ADDRESS YOUR LETTERS TO MR. SHANKER AT THE AFT, 555 NEW JERSEY AVE., N.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20001. ©1991 BY ALBERT SHANKER.

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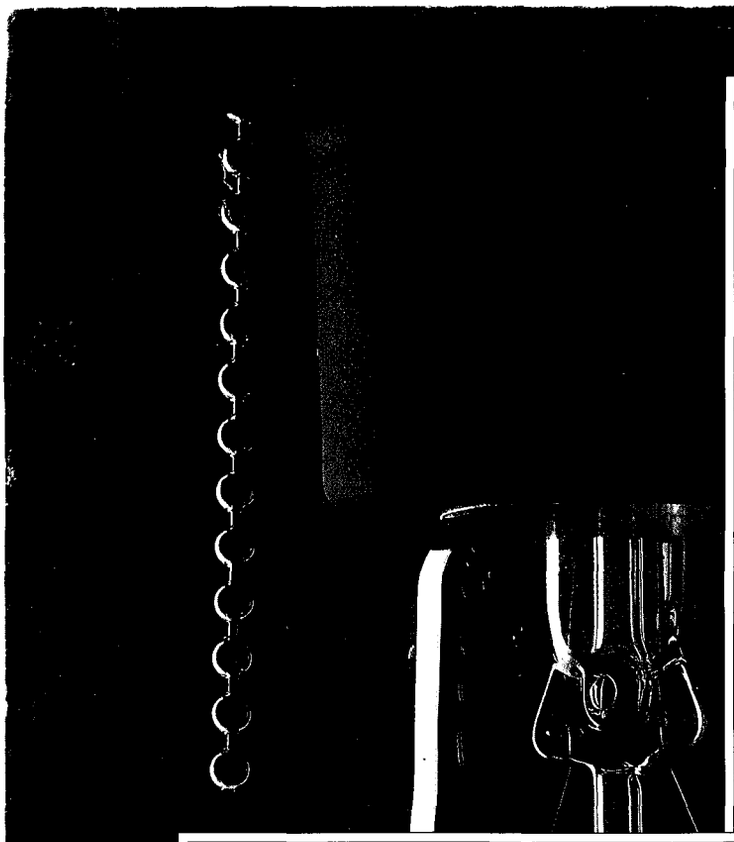
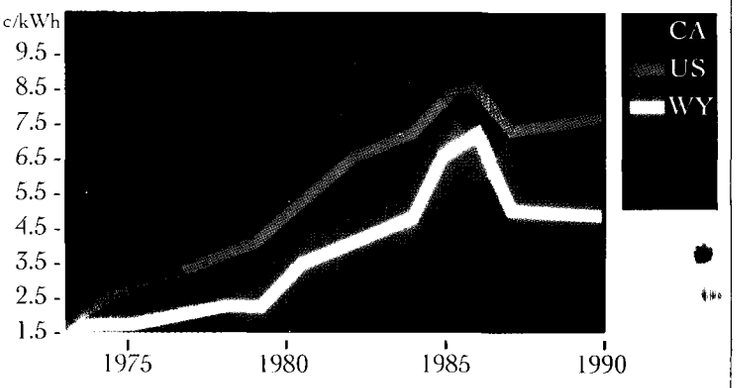


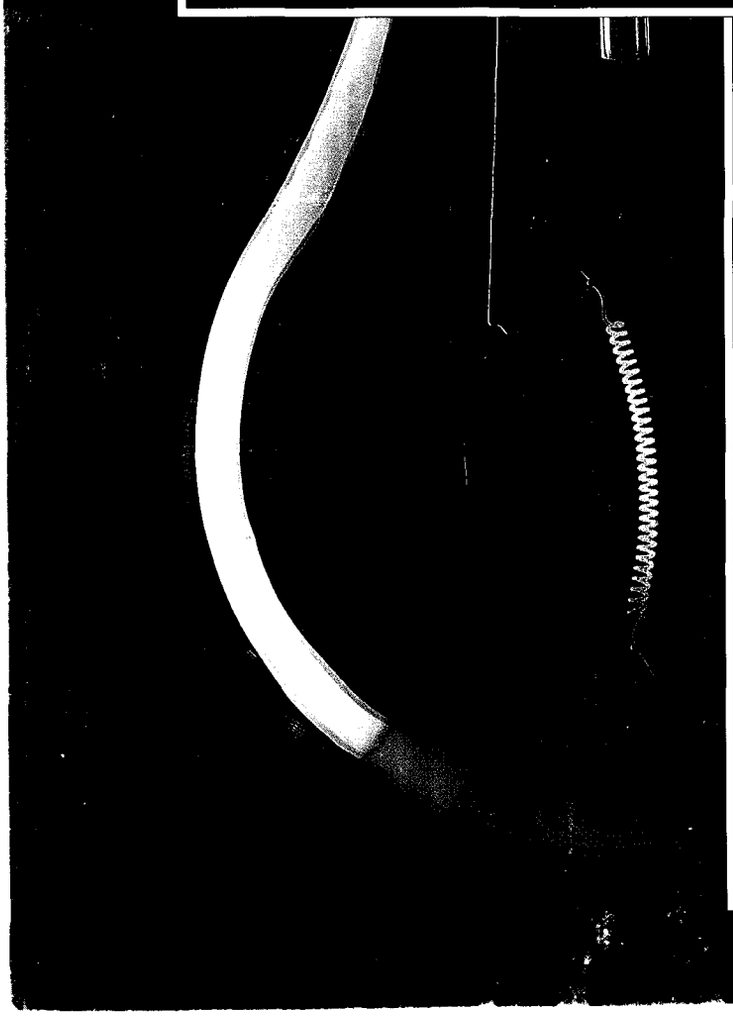
Price History of Electricity in California, Wyoming, and the U.S.

Source: Mills McCarthy & Associates based on EEI figures; revenues per kilowatt hour sold



The debate about national energy policy continues. Environmental professionals say using renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and biomass is the direction to take for economic and environmental reasons. Advocates of conventional fossil fuel energy sources maintain that low cost, efficient fossil fuel combustion technologies are compatible with the environment and are vital for healthy U.S. and world economies.

California's Energy Experiment: A Dim View Of The Future.



Who is right?

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If Californians paid the same rates as those in Wyoming, the total electric bill in California would drop more than $5 billion per year. An unjustified reliance on renewables is simply a recipe for high energy prices, high living costs, and inflation.

The answer for those concerned about economic growth and equity for people on low or fixed incomes is this: reliance on a new generation of clean-burning, efficient fossil fuel resources offers a bright energy future. Adopting California's policies would be a mistake. If California is the future – it doesn't work.

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